John Ruskin

by

M. H. Spielmann

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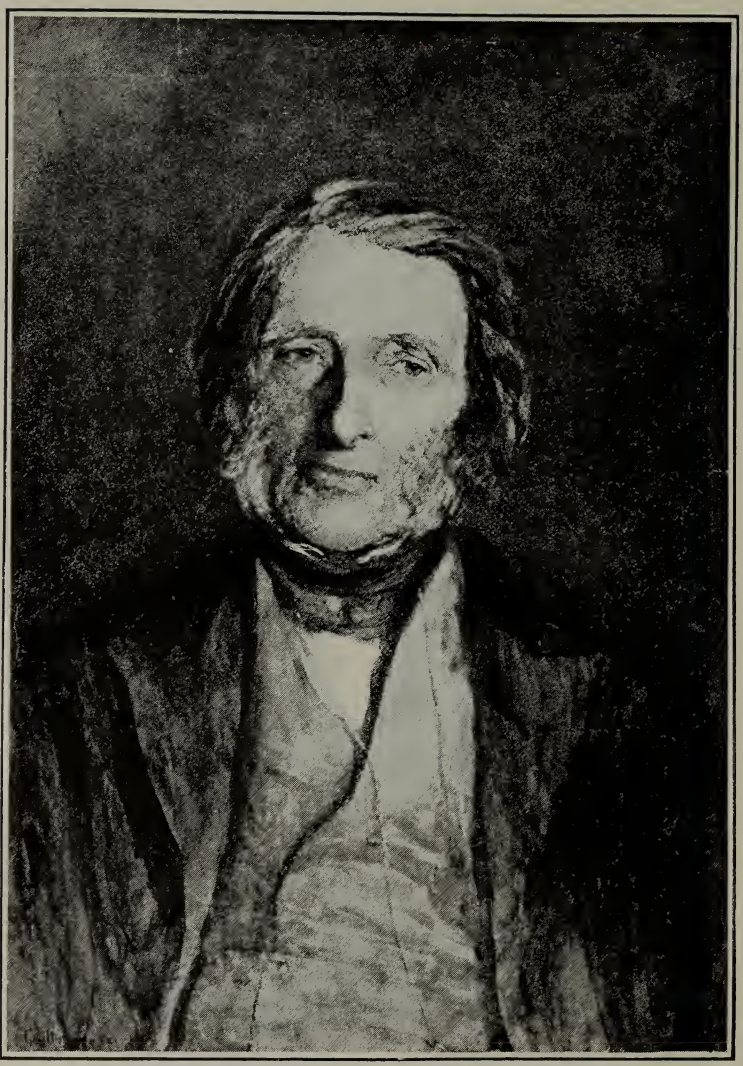
JOHN RUSKIN



JOHN RUSKIN, 1881.

BY PROFESSOR HUBERT HERKOMER, R.A.

(*By permission of the Artist.*)

(*See p. 191.*)

JOHN RUSKIN

A Sketch of His Life, His Work, and His Opinions
With Personal Reminiscences

BY

M. H. SPIELMANN

AUTHOR OF HENRIETTE RONNER, THE WORKS OF G. F. WATTS, R.A., ETC. EDITOR OF THE MAGAZINE OF ART

TOGETHER WITH
A PAPER BY JOHN RUSKIN, ENTITLED
THE BLACK ARTS

AND A NOTE ON RUSKIN BY HARRISON S. MORRIS, MANAGING DIRECTOR ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO

MY WIFE.

A NOTE ON RUSKIN.

THE dying century for which he has laboured so valiantly marks the death of John Ruskin.

On Saturday, the twentieth of January, 1900, he passed into the brightness of that day whose herald he has been, and his many books alone shall henceforth speak for him. He saw the light and caught the sounds from beyond our ken. He was the pilot of our race, leading the way into the realm of beauty that alone is truth. We gave him little heed; we flouted his noble words; we laughed at his whims and worries; we pressed forward with steam and sordid desire in his despite. But as surely as the odour from a flower steals

out and purifies the air, as irresistibly as the brook runs into the unacknowledging sea, so do his opinions, his ethics, his very syllables, enter and take part in our existence. We cannot silence them with jeers, for they are as silent in their influence as an odour, nor can we stifle them with ignorance. Each author, journalist, versifier, preacher, uses unheedingly a speech made purer by this master of our tongue, and each must utter the code, in whatsoever form, which the purer lips and richer brain have made a part of our unconscious thought.

It is the mission of such a soul as John Ruskin's to deal with contemporary things rather than with elemental ones. He was born a lofty antagonist of besetting ills. He saw, indeed, the deeper purport of events, and spoke with profound meaning of them; the heights of erudition were early conquered, and the meaning and purpose of life and death were clear. But, instead of touching a creative chord, these thrilled to the dragon at the

gates, and he fought like a hero with the foe.

Such a contest demands the qualities which uplift a people; but when the knightly lance is forever at rest, the hero is a memory. His work is over; it is history, and its interest for the generations is the interest of history, and not the interest of living and elemental force.

Ruskin's work is over. He lies with his great ancestors in the English valhalla of thought, with Bacon and Jeremy Taylor and Burke, with Coleridge and Haydon and Carlyle. The good he achieved is the world's, and the world will hold him in blessed remembrance while beauty rests in the open landscape or rises into forms of stone that shall endure.

His own volumes are his best exponents. They are the ripeness of his gleanings. They give the man's thought and mental stature; but they omit the man. In the pages that follow some of the personal threads of his great career are woven into a likeness of him, and the reader who has drunk at his

"well of English undefiled" will find here matter with which to realize the person who animates the books.

HARRISON S. MORRIS.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS book is intended to present a brief outline of the life and opinions of the "Sage of Coniston," together with some account of his personality, which I have had the opportunity of gaining a knowledge of in his company and in that of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn; as well as by the study of his writings and by inquiry into the impressions made by Ruskin upon some of the chief writers of the day.

I have also included the recital of certain facts and correspondence that arose out of our intercourse, deeming them interesting enough to be placed on record, not otherwise, perhaps, preservable.

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JOHN RUSKIN.

INTRODUCTION.

'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
  Where he in English earth is laid,
  And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
  That sleeps, or wears the mask of sleep,
  And come, whatever loves to weep,
And hear the ritual of the dead.

Since Tennyson died no greater loss has been sustained by English literature in the memory of the present generation than that of John Ruskin. Of all men who have dominated the Art-world of Britain during the nineteenth century, Ruskin is beyond all question and beyond all comparison the greatest, and, by universal admission, the most individual and most interesting. What his exact position as a critic and preacher of Art may be, what his rank as a scientist or a leader of thought, I make no pretence here of determining. But

by common consent, he has been the most distinguished figure in the arena of Art-philosophy for half-a-century and more, the philanthropist-militant *par excellence*. He is the man who has admittedly moulded the taste of the public to a preponderating extent in matters æsthetic, and, apart from his labours outside the pale of Art has exerted an influence so powerful that he has given a direction to the practice of painting and architecture that may still be traced in some of the happiest productions of the day. His death has given reason for mourning to many; no one has more eloquently, more passionately, pleaded the cause of the poor than Ruskin—no one (except it be perhaps Mr. Gladstone, his political *bête noire*) could boast so vast a number of friends amongst the great mass of the public. No one was more frequently appealed to for advice, nor to better or kindlier purpose. None, indeed, has loved his country better, or more loyally striven to serve her. And, in the general regret, few will be found so blind or rancorous as to remember aught but the conscientious labours of his life, the nobility of his sturdy efforts, and the sacrifices that he made for public and for private good.

CHAPTER I.

HIS LIFE.

The outline of his life is briefly this. He was born in London, at 54, Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, on February 8, 1819. His father (his mother's cousin) was a Scotsman, bringing his "good and extremely strong will," as the son tells us, into the firm of wine merchants known as "Ruskin, Telford, and Domecq" (agents for Peter Domecq, the great sherry-grower of Xerez), and to such good purpose that he speedily became a successful and a wealthy man. John Ruskin, the son, was an only child, and for several years he was entirely without companions of his own age, with hardly an amusement or boyish joy, save such few as were allowed him by his austere mother and austerer aunt, and "accustomed to no other prospect than that of the brick walls over the way." Always an extremely sensitive and nervous child, he became studious, thoughtful, and observant, but lively and impressionable withal; so that when the "first event of his life" took place—no less an occasion than being taken by his eminently

disagreeable nurse to the brow of Friar's Craig, or Derwentwater—the intense joy and awe he felt sank so deeply into his soul that the love of landscape became henceforth and for always his prevailing passion. In the conduct of his business Mr. Ruskin senior was constrained to drive throughout the length and breadth of England, travelling with post-chaise and pair; and as soon as his son was old enough he carried him with him during the holidays, and never missed showing to him all the beautiful views, the cathedrals, castles, ruins, and picture-galleries, public and private, near which their course might lay. It was thus that the boy's love of scenery and of art was first nurtured and developed. He had already begun, at the age of eight, to sing the praises of landscape in precocious verse; and his father—a highly intellectual and cultivated man, and no mean artist himself—gladly recognised his tendency, and encouraged his passion by placing him for instruction under J. D. Harding and Copley Fielding. By those eminent but somewhat conventional water-colour painters—then reckoned amongst the best teachers of the day—his remarkable executive skill was formed, while his ordinary education he received first from members of his own family, and then from the testy, but kind-hearted, Canon Dale and other private tutors.

JOHN RUSKIN, 1822.

FROM THE OIL PAINTING BY JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A.

(By permission of Arthur Severn, Esq., R.I.)

(See p 170.)

It was in 1835, at the age of sixteen, that Ruskin made his first appearance in the public press by contributing a series of geological articles, with illustrations by himself, to the *Magazine of Natural History.* Later on, under the pseudonym of "Kata Phusin" ("According to Nature"), he printed other papers on Art and Architecture in Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* which in 1892 were republished in sumptuous garb under the title of "The Poetry of Architecture." He was but eighteen when he wrote this book. In later years he excused the anonymity he had preserved in respect to it by pleading that the public would hardly have felt inclined to accept such frank dogmatism from one so young. When I reminded Mr. Burne-Jones of this candid excuse, the artist replied with smiling surprise: "When, then, *should* one be dogmatic if not at the age of eighteen?"

Having entered Christchurch, Oxford, as a gentleman commoner, he began at once his friendship with his contemporary Dr. (now Sir Henry) Acland—half-a-century afterwards the indirect and unoffending cause, I believe, of his resignation of the Slade Professorship at the University. From Dr. Buckland he acquired that profound geological knowledge which has

always been one of the mainstays of Ruskin's writings on Art or Science, and of inestimable service to him later, whether as critic, painter, lecturer, or disputant. It may also be said that to Mr. W. H. Harrison Ruskin owed much that was not inborn of the elegance and purity of his literary style; just as from the Rev. Osborne Gordon he acquired the greater part of his general scholarship. In 1839 he gained the Newdigate Prize, with his poem "Salsette and Elephanta," which has since been reprinted; and he graduated B.A. in 1842. It was in that year that he wrote in support and defence of Turner, who, now eight-and-sixty years of age, old and alone, slighted and misunderstood by the public, was being savagely written down by nearly all the critics, who could neither appreciate his beauties nor excuse his faults. In 1843, when twenty-four years old, and three years after his introduction to Turner, Ruskin expanded this explosion, penned "in the height of black anger," into what is known as the first volume of "Modern Painters: By a Graduate of Oxford." This, without doubt, was the central event of Ruskin's life, eventful and contentious as it has ever been.

The sensation which the book created in artistic circles has rarely been equalled before or since. Its reception was tremendous, and

JOHN RUSKIN, 1824.

("THE THORN IN THE FOOT")

FROM AN OIL PAINTING BY JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A.

(*By permission of Arthur Severn, Esq., R.I.*)

(*See p. 172.*)

the violence and bitterness with which the unknown author was attacked by the critics were drowned only by the rapturous storm of applause that arose from the Art-public at large, who accepted with enthusiasm the brilliance and fire of his writing, and the force and genius of his powerful reasoning. The immediate effect of the work was to establish Turner's reputation, firmly and for ever, as the greatest landscape-painter the world has ever seen, and his own as perhaps the greatest of modern English prose-writers. Four more volumes completed the work, but the last was not published until 1860—after nearly twenty years of laborious preparation, passed in incessant study and travelling, mainly in Switzerland and Italy, had been devoted to the task. Mr. Hamerton, in his "Intellectual Life," points out with truth how, in common with the Humboldts, Ruskin affords a striking example of the value of wealth to an intellectual career. Had it not been for his material prosperity, all his genius, force of resolution and resistance to every temptation to indolence would not have sufficed to enable him to carry through the work of seventeen years' study and expensive preparation. As Mr. Hamerton says, "Modern Painters" is not merely a work of genius, but of genius seconded by wealth.

In the meantime he had been busy with other writings. In 1847 he contributed his first review to the *Quarterly*—his text being Lord Lindsay's "History of Christian Art." Two years later—having been brought, during his preparation of "Modern Painters," to turn his attention to the Queen of the Arts—he published his "Seven Lamps of Architecture," in which he sets forth the theory how in a nation's dominant style of architecture may be seen reflected its life and manners, and even its passions and its religion. Following on the lines thus laid down, Ruskin proceeded, in "The Stones of Venice," issued in 1851 and 1853, to tell the history of the rise and fall of Venice, as illustrated by her buildings, and to show how the prosperity and art of a nation are synchronous and interdependent, and how the purity of national art and of the national conscience and morals act and re-act each upon the other.

It was at this time, while Ruskin was astonishing the world with his originality and startling it with his eager sincerity, that the society then termed and since known as the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" sprang into being. A brilliant band of youthful enthusiasts —comprising John Everett Millais, W. Holman Hunt, W. M. Rossetti, Frederick G. Stephens,

CHRISTCHURCH COLLEGE, OXFORD.

SHOWING RUSKIN'S ROOMS WHEN HE WAS IN RESIDENCE AS A GENTLEMAN-COMMONER.

These are on the first floor, the fourth and fifth from the right.

(*From a photograph by H. Taunt & Co.*)

James Collinson, Thomas Woolner, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti—combined with the avowed object of founding a school of painting of which absolute truth to nature in all things, especially in respect to detail, was to be the fundamental principle ; a path of material truth from which Raphael was held to have been the first to stray, and which, by a sort of tacit consent, had been untrodden by all others since his day. An object and mission so worthy were precisely such as would enlist the sympathies and fire the generous and chivalrous nature of Ruskin, encouraged and directed as he was by the advice of Dyce. He straightway threw himself heart and soul into the fray, first by his celebrated letter to the *Times*, and afterwards by his "Pre-Raphaelitism," and other writings, whereby he not only succeeded in securing a fair hearing and judgment for the harassed and persecuted exponents of the creed, but in educating the public into an appreciation of their works. He came, in fact, to be regarded as the prophet of the school, and his doughty championship constitutes one of the stormiest passages of his disputatious life. His chief, or most obvious, reward was the ridicule of the world, or such part of it as he especially addressed himself to. The general sentiment aroused was fairly reflected by the well-known

amusing cartoon by Mr. Frederick Sandys—himself, by the way, by no means out of sympathy with the teaching of the school. In this clever parody of Sir John Millais's "Sir Isumbras at the Ford," which was then the sensation of the Academy, Mr. Sandys humorously represented Ruskin as the ass of burden of the P.-R.B., on whose back Millais, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti were carried across the stream of shallow waters.

In 1860 Ruskin, who had by this time become a power in the land, threw himself into a new crusade. Truth, purity of motive, and honesty of execution, which he had so long and so fervently preached as essentials, not only to the highest, but to all sincere art, he now came to consider in relation to social science, and he began a series of papers entitled "Unto this Last," which he contributed to the *Cornhill Magazine*. Their tendency and effect may easily be imagined. They waged war—with all the bitterness and all the torrentuous eloquence of a prophet of old—against the whole world of commerce and its methods, and assailed the stronghold of the political economists with the fiery vigour of which John Ruskin, in these latter days, has almost alone been possessed. His principles and views, however, being based upon quite the highest interpre-

tation and application of an ethical morality such as his master, Carlyle, had preached before him, were rejected with anger and contempt by the commercial community. So strongly, indeed, did they resent his Utopian philosophy that the editor (who at that time was Thackeray), fearful for the fate of his magazine, which was threatened with serious injury by the publication of the obnoxious articles, put a summary stoppage to their further issue. It was, however, one of the crowning and closing glories of Ruskin's life—at once his delight and consolation—that in more recent times thinkers have come to accept many of his theories and contentions once spurned or rejected, and the public to receive them as truths.

In 1865 and 1866 appeared "Sesame and Lilies" and "Crown of Wild Olive," the most popular of Ruskin's books in England and America alike (if sales may be taken as a criterion) and, perhaps, his masterpieces of prose-writing. In 1867 he was elected Rede Lecturer at Cambridge, with the honorary degree of LL.D.; but so far back as 1853 he had made his *début* as a lecturer, when he addressed the Edinburgh students on "Gothic Architecture." Moreover he, with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and F. D. Maurice, had taken vast interest of the teaching sort in the

Working Men's College in 1865. In 1870 he was appointed Professor of Fine Art at Oxford, to the chair founded in the previous year by Mr. Felix Slade. He was at Verona when he received the invitation, and, as he himself has written, "I foolishly accepted it. My simple duty at that time was to have stayed with my widowed mother at Denmark Hill" [his father had died in 1864], "doing whatever my hand found to do there. Mixed vanity, hope of wider usefulness, and partly her pleasure in my being at Oxford again, took me away from her and from myself." Mrs. Ruskin dearly loved Oxford, where her son had spent those three happy years at college. The professorship he continued to hold until 1879, delivering lectures on every phase of Art—lectures which have since been published—and only resigned his post when he discovered that the enthusiasm and constant attendance of the students were due rather to personal attachment and appreciation of his original and forceful way of putting things, than to real interest in the subjects upon which he discoursed.

Ruskin's famous periodical, "Fors Clavigera" ("Fortune, the Club-bearer"), was begun in 1871, and for eight years was devoted to the expositions of its author's views upon everything in general, written with a nervous energy

and an easy familiarity eminently Ruskinian, strikingly fresh in style and catholic in scope. It was in its pages that he announced his intention of founding the "St. George's Guild," first established in that year—a practical attempt to start and carry on a land-owning society conducted on the principles which he would have all landowners to adopt. On this institution he at once settled £7,000, and a London freehold of the value of £3,500 more, and of all this Miss Octavia Hill was appointed manageress.

In this same "Fors," on July 2, 1877, appeared the author's famous criticism of Mr. Whistler and his pictures, then being exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. The trial has even now become a classic; and how Mr. Whistler delivered his smart evidence in the witness-box, and how Ruskin—who was at the time confined to Brantwood with his first attack of serious illness—was unable to defend himself with his own testimony, and was made to pay his prosecutor one farthing for the rare privilege of saying what he thought of him—are to this day subjects of merry conversation where artists and lawyers meet. As a matter of fact, the verdict, which left each litigant to pay his own costs, made no call whatever on the purse of Mr. Ruskin. The amount of his costs reached, I believe, to £350, or thereabouts; but a

group of devoted admirers at once subscribed the amount, even to the last farthing—Mr. Whistler's farthing—and the sum was paid forthwith. But Mr. Ruskin never knew to the last to what the amount of the cost attained, nor the names of any of his enthusiastic friends, save that of Mrs. Talbot, of Barmouth. To the end he was not satisfied with his nominal defeat. "I am blamed by my prudent acquaintances for being too personal," said he; "but truly I find vaguely objurgatory language generally a mere form of what Plato calls 'shadow-fight.'" Similarly, when in conversation with him on one occasion I touched upon the subject, he quietly avoided it, saying, "I am afraid of a libel-action if I open my mouth, and if I can't say what I like about a person, I prefer to say nothing at all."

By this time Mr. Ruskin's disciples and admirers, who, acknowledged "Ruskinites," were now to be counted by thousands, rightly perceived that if their Master's doctrines, social and artistic, were to bear good fruit, it would be necessary that some sort of organisation should be formed for the dissemination of his writings, the indexing of his works, and the carrying of his theories into practical effect. The result was the beginning of the foundation of the "Ruskin Societies of the Rose," in

THE RUSKIN DRAWING SCHOOL, OXFORD.

(From a photograph by H. Taunt & Co.)

1879, in London, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Birmingham, and other centres —bodies now collectively known as "The Ruskin Society," which have sought and obtained vitality by dealing generally with poetry and art, education, morals, ethics, and all such other subjects as the Ruskinian philosophy has pronounced upon, apart from the narrower or more defined teachings of Mr. Ruskin himself. These affiliated societies are all of them in active existence.

After presenting many valuable gifts, artistic and mineralogical, to various institutions, endowing the Taylorian Galleries at Oxford with a school, furnishing it with exquisite works of art as copies, and making rich presents besides to the University, as well as to Cambridge and to the British Museum (whose collection of Silicas he catalogued) and rendering many other public services of a kindred nature, Mr. Ruskin crowned his work in this direction by the establishment and stocking of the St. George's Museum at Walkley, near Sheffield. He chose this spot because it was situated on the summit of a steep and toilsome hill, which, he hoped, the workers of Sheffield might understand to typify the ascent of the artistic path that none but earnest workers need care to face. But the hill proved

to be too generally and too successfully deterrent; and the removal of the reorganised museum to the fine old Georgian mansion of Meersbrook Park took place in 1890, when it was opened by the Earl of Carlisle. This beautiful museum, placed by deed under the joint control and management of the Trustees of the St. George's Guild and of the Corporation, contains a large collection of works of fine art, rare and exquisite books, Venetian casts, missals, splendid examples from his collection of mineralogy and natural history—all selected with thorough knowledge and purposeful care by "The Master" himself. And Ruskin House, Walkley, was in 1893 turned into a Girls' Training Home, with the hearty approval and cordial wishes of Ruskin.

But by this time his course was nearly run. He resigned the Slade Professorship, to which he had been re-elected in 1876, when a passing but distressing attack of brain-disturbance warned him that he was straining too far his powers of endurance by the multiplicity and arduousness of his labours. In 1884, when he was engaged in delivering another series of lectures at Oxford, he found it necessary to cease their public delivery, and to confine them to students—for the rush of the outside world to listen to the lecturer, no less than the wide

range of subject and method of dealing with it adopted by him—acted upon the University authorities as an electric shock. The final split soon came; the Professor, it was thought, was about to assail in his next lecture what he considered to be the vivisectionist tendencies of the University. Pressure was brought to bear upon him to "postpone" the lecture, which, in fact, he did. Ruskin then asked the University for a grant to permit of the better arrangement of the Art Section under his care. It was declined, on the ground of the University being in debt, but a few days later a vote was passed "endowing vivisection in the University," and on the following Sunday Mr. Ruskin's resignation was in the Vice-Chancellor's hands.

The facts connected with the matter, it may be said, appear to have been strangely burked. Since that time Mr. Ruskin retired from personal contact with the public, although for a time his pen was still busy, and the press gave forth more than one volume of his earlier, as well as of his later, writings. But his first attack of illness was succeeded by others, under which he gradually, but yet more peacefully, sank, until there came the end which robbed England of one of her greatest men, and, so to speak, cast the better part of her into mourning.

CHAPTER II.

CHARACTER, HEALTH, AND TEMPERAMENT.

It is impossible to form any accurate estimate of the literary work of Ruskin, or of the worth of the man himself and his acts, without taking his character and temper, as influenced by his health, largely into account. This, of course, is in a measure true of all men. But with one possessed of an organisation so complex and delicate as that of Ruskin, such knowledge and careful judgment are absolutely necessary, for they afford the clue to many apparent inconsistencies.

The conditions of his rearing all tended to foster self-conceit in the lad; and the wonder is that, being as clever as he was, and finding himself the object of constant applause from admiring friends, of the worship of parents, and the approval of some of the first intellects of the day—the wonder is, in truth, that he was so little of a prig. But his severe Bible teaching, the oft-repeated assurance that he was to become a preacher, and an eminent one, too, predisposed him, perhaps, towards the early idea of being

appointed to be unto the public as a missionary, and later, as an oracle and a seer. But many of his most admirable qualities barred the way to his complete success in these characters, and made him feel, to his intense and abiding disappointment in his later years, that he was a very Cassandra among the prophets. "All my life," he declared in my hearing some years ago, "all my life I have been talking to the people, and they have listened, not to what I say, but to how I say it; they have cared not for the matter, but only for the manner of my words. And so I have made people go wrong in a hundred ways, and they have done nothing at all. I am not," he added bitterly, "an art-teacher; they have picked up a few things from me, but I find I have been talking too much and doing too little, and so have been unable to form a school; and people have not been able to carry out what I say, because they do not understand it."

If we had to define the main characteristics of Ruskin's mind, "and the keys to the secret of all he said or did," I think we could hardly do better than repeat the analysis he made of Turner's; "Uprightness, generosity, extreme tenderness of heart, sensuality, excessive obstinacy, irritability, infidelity;" and, we should have to add, "impulsiveness, violent prejudice,

kindliest sympathy, and profound piety." But impulsiveness, and its offspring—prejudice—were at the root of too many of his acts and his hastier judgments. He was supposed to hate Jews on principle, not from religious motives, but simply because some of the lowest and most contemptible of them practised the usury that persecution had forced upon them; he despised all bishops, because some of them died rich. No one really deserves hanging, he says somewhere, save bankers and bishops. Perhaps this was written at the time of his famous duel with the late Bishop of Manchester on the subject of usury, when his indignation was aroused by what he imagined was the lukewarmness of his antagonist. Yet in no man's company did he more rejoice than in that of Dr. Harvey Goodwin, Bishop of Carlisle, whom he entertained at Brantwood more than once, and whom he loved and esteemed as he loved few others. But all his prejudice is to be traced to excessive generosity—a fact which, with all his love of paradox, he never would recognise himself.

It is not a little surprising, seeing how delicate and troubled he was in general health, and how numerous and actively bitter were his adversaries, that the engaging sweetness of his character was so often uppermost. His natural

gentleness was proof against the trying circumstances of his early education. At Oxford, as he himself tells us, "I could take any quantity of jests, though I could not make one," even to the point of seeing with good-humour the fruit he had sent for from London thrown out of the window to the porter's children. No man ever smiled more agreeably in his greeting; no man's eyes ever looked more kindly into yours. Having nothing to conceal, he was frank, even to a fault, making no attempt to hide his little amiable weaknesses and venial defects.

"I like Wilson Barrett," he said one day, when discussing the drama; "he flatters me so deliciously and in such tactful taste"—an admission, by the way, confirmed long before in a letter of instructions to his private secretary, written from abroad:—"Send me as little as you possibly can. Tie up the knocker—say I'm sick—I'm dead (flattering and love-letters, please, in any attainable quantity. Nothing else)." Love-letters! how many did he not write and delight in receiving—platonic for the most part, perhaps for the whole, but the brightest, quaintest, most humorous, merriest love-letters imaginable! For the respect, the veneration, and admiration he entertained for the *beau sexe* as a whole—as an institution, as

Artemus Ward calls it—were intensified, were all focussed, indeed, on young, pretty, and innocent femininity. Humour bubbles over the pages of many of his books and letters, but it is never quite so sly and quite so happy as when charming, modest, and lively girls are the subject or the object of them; and I have heard a score of anecdotes of the pretty thraldom under which he has suffered beneath their yoke, and the not unwelcome tricks that have oft been played upon him. I have said that his amorous sport was entirely platonic; it was more than that, it was essentially paternal: and usually ended in his presenting to his charmer, or tormentor, some dainty gift, with a playful grace that was altogether peculiar to himself.

Herein I am breaking no confidences, for has he not told us all about it a score of pleasant times? "My pets"—his adopted daughter, Mrs. Arthur Severn (his veritable "Angel in the house") and Miss Hilliard, now Mrs. W. H. Churchill—are familiar, through his books, to all good Ruskinites. He speaks of them often enough in "Fors," and of others too: "First, those two lovely ladies who were studying the *Myosotis palustris* with me; yes, and, by the way, a little beauty from Cheshire, who came in afterwards; and then that charm-

ing (I didn't say she was charming, but she was and is) lady whom I had charge of at Furness Abbey, and her two daughters, and those three beautiful girls who tormented me so on the 23rd of May, 1875, and another who greatly disturbed my mind at church only a Sunday or two ago with the sweetest little white straw bonnet I have ever seen, only letting a lock or two escape of the curliest hair; so that I was fain to make her a present of a Prayer-book afterwards, advising her that her tiny ivory one was too coquettish; and my own pet cousin; and I might name more, but leave their accusation to their consciences." On another occasion, speaking of his garden and house at Denmark Hill, he says: "The camelias and azaleas stand in the ante-room of my library; and everybody says, when they come in, 'How pretty!' and my young lady friends have leave to gather what they like to put in their hair when they are going to balls." He himself once admitted that when he fell in love in a "mildly confidential way"—"according to my usual manner of paying court to my mistresses, I wrote an essay for her, nine foolscap pages long, on the relative dignity of music and painting!" Many will remember with how much enthusiasm Charles Dickens, thirty or forty years ago,

endorsed in *All the Year Round* what Ruskin had to say of "the beauties of the maids of merry England," and the artistic grace of their then fashionable attire. Even when combating an obnoxious theory, he would sometimes revert to pretty womanhood for an illustration, as when, in animadverting on the Darwinian doctrine of the Descent of Man as mischievous (in looking rather to the growth of the flesh than to the breath of the spirit), he says: "The loss of mere happiness in such modes of thought is incalculable. When I see a girl dance, I thank Heaven that made her cheerful as well as graceful, and envy neither the science nor sentiment of my Darwinian friend, who sees in her only a cross between a dodo and a daddy-long-legs." And again, when contesting the idea that a knowledge of anatomy is essential for painters, he writes to Monsieur Chesneau: "Will you please ask the next lover you meet how far he thinks the beauty of his mistress's fore-arm depends on the double bones in it, and of her humerus on the single one?" Nay, one would swear that his "little Susie"—one of the sister ladies of Thwaite, to whom he wrote the delightful letters which have since been published under the title of "Hortus Inclusus"—must have been at once

JOHN RUSKIN, 1842.

FROM THE WATER COLOUR BY GEORGE RICHMOND, R.A.

(By permission of Arthur Severn, Esq., R.I.)

(*See p. 174.*)

pretty and graceful, were one to judge alone by the tone adopted in the letters he wrote her. But, as a matter of fact, Miss Susannah Beever —his neighbour in Coniston village, living in a house on an eminence looking over the lake-head—was a few years his senior, and was seventy years of age at least when Ruskin first knew her. To the end of her long life this clever lady was surprisingly young, and so bright and cheerful and sweet and charming, that she fully deserved the daily letters that the Master of Brantwood sent her. She had, indeed, discovered for herself the art of growing old beautifully, and she reaped the reward by completely enslaving the intellectual affections of her ageing friend.

But his love for pretty girls in no way lessened his love for children—a passion which inspired some of the most pathetic and beautiful passages that have issued from his pen. This tendency, together with his cordial and courteous old-fashioned hospitality and his overflowing charity, combined to form the bright side of his character—a side so bright that on the other there is none of his shortcomings but is thrown into shadow and belittled in its brilliancy. He has chosen to refer to his nature as "a worker's and a miser's . . . though I love giving, yet my

notion is not at all dividing my last crust with a beggar, but riding through a town like a Commander of the Faithful, having any quantity of sequins and ducats in saddle-bags, and throwing them around in radiant showers and hailing handfuls; with more bags to brace on when those were empty." But herein he did himself, as he often did, gross injustice, for I have ample documentary evidence in my possession that he delighted in nothing more—and almost daily gave rein to his delight—than giving, secretly, tactfully, and with kindliest judgment.

It is not too much to say that the record of his benefactions and almsgiving would fill a volume. How when his father died he gave forthwith to those relations who, he thought, had been forgotten in the will, the sum of £17,000, and to a cousin advanced another £15,000, a debt he promptly wiped off—"which hereby my cousin will please observe is very heartily done; and he is to be my cousin as he used to be, without any more thought of it"—has ere now been made public. But his thousand-and-one kindnesses—now acts of grace and delicacy, now of substantial help and rescue—have never reached the ken of the public save by the confession of the recipients. A few extracts from his letters to

his secretary during the year 1866 may give some idea of the extent and number of his kindly deeds, and of his solicitude and warmth of heart, though they give little clue to the times out of number on which the gentle Samaritan was victimised—the usual fate of the philanthropist who prides himself, beyond any other quality, on his worldly shrewdness and his knowledge of life and character.

On February 22nd he writes with some show of mystery—

"Here's something, please, I want done very much. Will you please go to the Crystal Palace to-morrow or the day after, which is the last day, but to-morrow better, and, if it is not sold, buy the lizard canary (£1) No. 282, page 17 of catalogue, in any name you like—*not* mine, nor yours—and give the bird to anybody who you think will take care of it, and I'll give you the price when I see you —which must be soon."

To this canary, which was duly bought, there evidently hung a tale, for it formed the subject of many subsequent references and anxious directions.

On the 5th of March he wrote—

"Did Ned speak to you about an Irish boy whom I want to get boarded and lodged, and put to some art schooling—and I don't know how?"

Three days afterwards he proceeded—

'Thanks for note about the boy, and infinite thanks for kindest offer. But I've no notion of doing as much

as this for him. All I want is a decent lodging—he is now a shop-boy. I only want a bit of a garret in a decent house, and means of getting him into some school of art. I fancy Kensington best—and you should look after him morally and I artistically."

On the 27th the boy from Ireland was duly settled on Ruskin's charity, and on the same date began the arrangement which ended in a gift of a hundred pounds to George Cruikshank. Then ensued a prolonged visit to the Continent, on the conclusion of which there came a new request for almoner's duty :—

"The enclosed is from a funny, rather nice, half-crazy old French lady (guessing at her from her letters), and I have a curiosity to know what kind of a being it is. Would you kindly call on her to ask for further information about the 'predicament,' and, if you think it at all curable or transit-able, I'll advance her 20 pounds without interest. I've only told her you will call to 'inquire into the circumstances of the case.'"

Although he complained that he "can't understand the dear old lady's letters," Ruskin decided—of course—to come to her help, charged his secretary to "look after" her a little, and added, "I shouldn't mind placing the over-charge sum at her bankers, besides."

"Also look over the enclosed form from ——. I'm very sorry about this man—anything more wretched than the whole business can't be. He'll never paint, and how to keep him from starvation and madness I can't see. I

can't keep every unhappy creature who mistakes his vocation. What can I do? I've rather a mind to send him this fifty pounds, which would be the simplest way to me of getting quit of him—but I can't get quit of the *thought* of him. Is his wife nice, do you know—or if you don't, would you kindly go and see? I've written to him to write to you, or to explain things to you, if you call. —— wrote to me in a worry for money the day before yesterday. I wrote I couldn't help him. All the earlier part of this week an old friend of my father's—a staff-writer on the *Times*—was bothering and sending his wife out here in cabs in the rain, to lend him £800, on no security to speak of, and yesterday comes a letter from Edinburgh saying that my old friend Dr. John Brown is gone mad—owing to, among other matters, pecuniary affairs (after a whole life of goodness and usefulness)."

Three days afterwards he put his foot down —temporarily.

"Tell —— it's absolutely *no* use his trying to see me (I don't even see my best friends at present, as you know), and nothing is of the least influence with *me* but plain facts, plainly told, and right conduct"

—a declaration that would have called a smile to the lips of many of the impostors who squeezed, before and since, the soft heart of the too sympathetic and charitable professor.

On the 14th of September Ruskin wrote—

"That boy's sketches are marvellous. I should like to see him and be of any use I could to him,"

and immediately followed it by another scheme of charity.

"Please just look over enclosed," he wrote, "and see if any little good *can or ought to be done*. I want you to go to Boulogne for me to see after the widow of a pilot who died at Folkestone of cholera. They were dear friends of mine, both as good as gold—she now quite desolate. When could you go, taking your cousin with you, if you like, for a few days? You would be well treated at the Hotel des Bains. I'll come over to-morrow and tell you about it.

"I don't think it will be necessary," he continued, a day or two later, "for you to stay at Boulogne longer than the enclosed will carry you. It is more as a bearer of the expression of my sympathy that I ask you to go than to *do* much. The poor woman ought to be able to manage well enough with her one child, if she lives, and I doubt not she will do all she ought—but at present she is stunned, and it will do her good to have you to speak to."

A few days afterwards another matter was forced on his attention.

"This business *is* serious" [the next letter ran]. "Write to Miss —— that I do not choose at present to take *any* notice of it, else the creditor would endeavour to implicate me in it at once, if there was the least appearance of my having been acquainted with the transaction—and I don't at all intend to lose money by force, whatever I may do for my poor friend when she is quit of lawyers."

Once more Ruskin lost patience at the unreasonable demands to which he was subjected, and on the 9th of November he wrote—

"All that you have done is nice and right—but I am sorry to see that you are yourself over-worked. Also, I

will take some measures to relieve you of this nuisance by writing a letter somewhere on modern destitution in the middle classes. I hope to be able to do this more effectively towards the beginning of the year, and to state that for the present I must retire from the position necessarily now occupied by a publicly recognised benevolent—or simple—person. . . I simply have at present no more money—and therefore am unable to help—in fact, I am a long way within of my proper banker's balance—and I don't choose at present to sell out stock and diminish my future power of usefulness.

"I think I shall do most ultimate good by distinctly serviceable appropriation of funds, not by saving here and there an unhappy soul—I wish I could—when I hear of them—as you well know. I am at the end of my means just now, and that's all about it."

Wherewith he at once made a further gift of a hundred pounds, "as I said I would." Such is the record of a few months of a single year taken at random; and it may fairly be assumed that one year much resembled another in the cycle of the Ruskinian doctrine of Faith, Hope, and, above all, Charity.

In his taste for amusement Mr. Ruskin was always simple. Almost to the last he retained his love for the theatre, and was an admirable critic of a play. "Now that I am getting old," he told me, "and can climb the hills no longer, my chief pleasure is to go to the theatre. Just as I can always enjoy Prout, even when I sometimes tire of Turner,

so one of the only pleasures in my life entirely undiminished is to see a good actor and a good play. I was immensely pleased with *Claudian* and Mr. Wilson Barrett's acting of it." [It was during the run of that play that this conversation took place.] "Indeed, I admired it so much that I went to see it three times from pure enjoyment of it, although as a rule I cannot sit out a tragic play. It is not only that it is the most beautifully mounted piece I ever saw, but it is that every feeling that is expressed in the play, and every law of morality that is taught in it, is entirely right. I call that charming little play of *School* entirely immoral, because the teaching of it is that a man should swagger about in knickerbockers, shoot a bull, and marry an heiress. Now, as for the literature of modern plays, I think that in comedies the language is often very precious and piquant—more so in French than in English pieces; but I know of no tragedy, French or English, whose language satisfies me." And he added that he was a critical admirer, too, with reservations, of Miss Mary Anderson —"a sweet lady and an excellent person—but not, I think, a great actress."

In fine weather, when he did not roam about the moors and hills that overlook

Coniston Lake, he loved to cut brushwood that grew in the wood behind his house; and in bad, when not reading, or drawing, or examining his fossils or other treasures, he would revel in a game of chess. He was an excellent player, and at one time talked of "publishing a selection of favourite old games by players of genius and imagination, as opposed to the stupidity called chess-playing in modern days. Pleasant play, truly! in which the opponents sit calculating and analysing for twelve hours, tire each other nearly into apoplexy or idiocy, and end in a draw or a victory by an odd pawn."

The darker side of his nature almost balanced, in intensity, the brighter. There is a weird, almost Dantesque, vein running through it. His love of life and beauty gave rise to a perfectly morbid horror of what was ugly or sad—illness and death were ideas utterly repugnant in the terror they bore in upon him. In a private letter he speaks of "Death and the North Wind—both Devil's inventions as far as I can make out." Indeed, during one of his last visits to London, I heard him say how his attacks of illness were brought on, or, at least, in a measure, induced, by the knowledge of the gradual approach of death—not so much the fear of death, he hastened to add, as the

regret at the deprivation of life, which he was convinced he enjoyed with infinitely greater intensity than others did.

The very idea of a funeral was abhorrent to him. He even declined to attend that of the Duke of Albany, of whom he was very fond; for the young Prince often sought his company at Oxford, and the old man and the young learned to appreciate the virtues of the other. "I had the deepest regard and respect," he said about the time of the Duke's death, "for what I would call his genius, rather than his intellect. He was entirely graceful and kind in every thought or deed. There was no mystery about him—he was perfectly frank and easy with everyone. At Oxford I thought he desired to take all the advantage that was possible from the university course. But I did not attend the funeral. It is ten years or more since I went to one," he continued gravely; "and though there are several whom I love very dearly, I doubt very much if I should see them to the grave were they to die before me. No—I shall go to no more funerals till I go to my own." In this relation there may be appropriately quoted the reply he sent to the Secretary of the Church of England Funeral Reform Association—a society of all others of whose attentions and requests for recommenda-

tion and approval he would most cheerfully have dispensed :—

"Sir,—I entirely approve of the object of the Funeral Reform Association; but if I could stop people from wasting their money while they were alive, they might bury themselves how they liked for aught I care.

"Faithfully yours,

"JOHN RUSKIN."

The growing knowledge of a constitutional brain-weakness caused him acute suffering, and he made no attempt to conceal the fact; on the contrary, it was a frank topic of conversation with him. There is something profoundly pathetic in a reference of his to his keen enjoyment, in his childhood, in reading Don Quixote's crazy life, but of the superlative sadness with which the reference or thought of it filled him in later years. "My illnesses, so-called," he says somewhere else, "are only brought on by vexation or worry, and leave me, after a few weeks of wandering thoughts, the same as I was before, only a little sadder and wiser. Probably, if I am spared till I am seventy, I shall be as sad and wise as I ever wish to be, and will try to keep so to the end."

At the age of twenty-one he spat blood, as a result of putting on a spurt in his study at Oxford, and obtained a year's leave of absence to recover. Ever since that time his letters

are proof of constant ailing and sometimes of suffering.

True illness, severe enough to confine him to his bed, he never had, from his alarming Oxford symptoms down to 1871, when an inflammatory illness laid him low at Matlock. Of the manner in which he characteristically took his treatment in great measure into his own hands he writes thus, under date 24th July, 1871 :—

"Really your simplicity about naughty *me* is the most comic thing I know, among all my old friends. *Me* docile to Doctors! I watched them—(I had three)—to see what they knew of the matter: did what they advised me, for two days; found they were utterly ignorant of the illness & were killing me. I had inflammation of the bowels, and they gave me ice! & tried to nourish me with milk! Another 12 hours & I should have been past hope. I stopped in the *middle* of a draught of iced water, burning with insatiable thirst—thought over the illness myself steadily—and ordered the doctors out of the house. Everybody was in agony, but I *swore* and raged till they had to give in; ordered hot toast and water in quantities, and mustard poultices to the bowels. One doctor had ordered fomentation; *that* I persevered in, adding mustard to give outside pain. I used brandy and water as hot as I could drink it, for stimulant, kept myself up with it, washed myself out with floods of toast and water, & ate nothing & refused *all* medicines. In twenty-four hours I had brought the pain under, in twenty-four more I had healthy appetite for meat, and was safe; but the agony of poor Joanna! forced to give

JOHN RUSKIN AT GLENFINLAS WATERFALL, 1853.

BY SIR JOHN MILLAIS, BART., R.A.

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(*See p. 178.*)

me meat, for I ordered roast chicken instantly, when the doctors, unable to get at me, were imploring *her* to prevail on me not to kill myself, as they said I should. The poor thing stood it nobly—of course—none of them could move *me*, on which I forced them to give me cold roast beef & mustard at two o'clock in the morning! ! And here I am, thank God, to all intents and purposes quite well again; but I was within an ace of the grave, and I know now something of Doctors that—well—I thought Molière bad enough on them, but he's complimentary to what *I* shall be after this."

But with the exception of this grave, tragi-comical attack he never needed the calling in of a doctor for any physical ill. Yet at no time was he robust, a spine-weakness developed into a chronic stoop, and the aches and pains of a highly nervous, hard-worked constitution were for ever reminding him of the weakness of all flesh. A number of his letters are before me, written to his secretary and assistant—with whom, as I have already said, he was in extremely frequent communication—during the years 1865 and 1866; and in many of them may be seen the record of his ailing moments and minor infirmities.

"You must think it very strange in me," he writes under date 3rd November, 1865, "never asking you to come and see me. But I am very languid and ill just now—and I seem of all things to dread *talking;* it seems to force me to use my head faster than it should

be used—I suppose I shall come out of the nervous fit some day. I am pretty well on the whole."

In the summer of the next year (3rd August, 1866) he writes:—

"I've been very sulky and ill, and somehow have wanted what humanity I could get, even out of letters, so I've kept them."

Again, on the 3rd of November of the same year, he says:—

"You can't at all think what complicated and acute worry I've been living in the last two months. I'm getting a little less complex now—only steady headache instead of thorn-fillet—I don't mean to be irreverent; but in a small way in one's poor little wretched humanity it but expresses the differences. That's why I couldn't think about Cruikshank or anything."

On the 2nd of December he again complains:—

"I have perpetual faceache, which quinine hardly touches, and am pulled down rather far; but in other respects a little better—stomach and the like."

And so things went on—never very bad, but often bad enough to worry the neurotic subject with his little valetudinary troubles, while all the while his self-imposed tasks increased in daily volume. At one time, indeed, the correspondence of friends and applicants of all kinds, and particularly of sympathisers—those most troublesome of well-wishers—en-

croached so severely upon his time and patience, rendering the conditions of his life almost intolerable, that the issue of this quaint manifesto was decided upon :—

"Mr. Ruskin trusts that his friends will pardon his declining correspondence in the spring, and spending such days as may be spared to him in the fields, instead of at his desk. Had he been well he would have been in Switzerland, and begs his correspondents to imagine that he is so; for there is no reason, because he is obliged to stop in England, that he should not be allowed to rest there."

Little wonder, then, that his health told upon his temper, and that nervous irritability tended to modify his character, and, to some extent, tended to embitter an old age that was already full of disappointments and disillusionments. After a lifetime of preaching to an unheeding world, or battling with a hostile or scornful one, finding his system of philosophy and theories rejected, or, if accepted, accepted only as the teaching of other and younger men, it is but natural that he should be prompted to say, after half-a-century of toil, "Some of me is dead, more of me stronger. I have learned a few things, forgotten many. In the total of me, I am but the same youth, disappointed and rheumatic." But, not beaten even to the last; badgered and baited all through his life; at-

tacked by some, scoffed at by others—as all fighters of original genius must ever be—he complained not of counter-attack. It was the supineness of those who listened and applauded, but continued in what he held was the downward road, which caused him to confess the state of "quiet rage and wonder at everything people say and do in which I habitually live."

CHAPTER III.

AUTHOR, BOOKMAN, AND STYLIST.

It is presumed that most of those who read these pages are too well informed on Ruskin's work to need any recapitulation of the order, or the titles, or even the purpose of his books. But it may be set down that they comprise art-criticism, art-instruction, architecture, natural history, political economy, morals and ethics, mineralogy and geology, biography and auto-biography, fairy-tale, military tactics, the "higher journalism" and most other things besides. But time will, perhaps, decide that by "Modern Painters" he will both stand and fall—a paradox which himself, I fancy, would be the first to admit. It is the monument he has raised to himself: but other works rank above them in the late author's opinion, if not for literary style, at least for concision of manner and closeness of thought. He told me he had "never written closer" than in his University Lectures, known as "Aratra Pentelici" ("and they will recognise it one of these days"), while he has publicly declared

that in that book, in "Val d'Arno," and "Eagle's Nest," "every word is weighed with care." "I give far more care to my lectures than to my books," he said; "They are for the most part most carefully written, although I sometimes introduce matter extemporaneously in the delivery of them. I have taken more pains with my Oxford lectures than with anything else I have ever done, and I must say that I am immensely disappointed at their not being more constantly quoted and read." And thus saying, he took down a volume of the "Aratra" and read the concluding pages of one of the lectures in his own powerful and impressive manner. Then he closed the book, softly, with a sigh.

Ruskin was, indeed, a rigorous critic of his own work, and cut to pieces "Modern Painters," "Seven Lamps of Architecture," "Stones of Venice," and "Elements of Drawing," when preparing second editions, "because in the three first all the religious notions are narrow, and many false, and in the fourth there is a vital mistake about outline, doing great damage to all the rest." But if it is one of the disturbing faults of Ruskin's books that he often owns to his later change of thought, it is one of his merits that he is ready to confess it, clearly

and unmistakably. These changes of thought he once intended to tabulate, while quaintly apologising for them. "Mostly matters of any consequence are three-sided, or four-sided, or polygonal; and the trotting round a polygon is severe work for people in any way stiff in their opinions." At the same time he declared that his changes were those of a tree, by nourishment and natural growth —not those of a cloud. And what is his reflection on his own auctorial life? "I am quite horrified to see," he wrote to "Susie" —or was it "Rosie"?—"what a lot of books I've written, and how cruel I've been to myself and everybody else whoever has to read them."

It was in his quality of author that Ruskin ran a-tilt at the book-selling trade, and suffered not a little in pocket from their retaliation. He objected to the whole system of "discount" as it had already then degenerated. The trade, not unnaturally, perhaps, retorted with a very effectual boycott, and Mr. Ruskin had to distribute his books to the public direct from his own special and private publisher—Mr. George Allen, who before had been his engraver. More lately a compromise was effected with the shops; but, curiously enough, the trade boycott seems to have been taken

up by the Press, which for a long series of years maintained rigorous silence in respect to Mr. Ruskin's newly-published works. Writing in 1887, Mr. E. T. Cook remarked: "So, too, the professedly literary journals have not noticed anything that one of the foremost literary men of the time has written since 1872!" Meanwhile, his works were being pirated in America and his own editions undersold—a circumstance which increased his dislike to the vulgarer side of American life, and of that unhappy country "which contains neither castle nor ruins."

There is assuredly no need to await the verdict of posterity to establish Ruskin's position as a writer of English prose. No man possessed of such a power of language, such a wealth of imagination and beauty of thought ever spent more care in the polishing of his sentences. And this not only with his written books, but with his newspaper letters, on which —as he told me himself—he expended the utmost pains at his command.

With such natural gifts as these, his training was exactly such as would best develop his powers and form his style. The extensive Bible-reading and Bible-learning, forced upon him when a child, laid the foundations for pure and vigorous English, and encouraged

his later admiration for the manner of Dr. Johnson. This alone would have gone far to educate him into the accomplished rhapsodist he soon became. But other carefully-selected reading exerted powerful influence upon his future style. Byron and Wordsworth he studied carefully (and indeed knew pretty well by heart)—the former for perfect fluency and realistic truth of vision, and the latter for the beauty of simplicity and naturalness of language and expression. "Even Shakespeare's Venice was visionary; and Portia as impossible as Miranda. But Byron told me of, and re-animated for me, the real people whose feet had worn the marble I trod on." And, finally, Carlyle, his friend and admirer, gave the final turn of originality of expression and that effective directness and apparent ruggedness which endows all that Ruskin ever wrote with a rich quality of its own, and made the man, as Mr. Justice Pearson said, "the most eloquent writer of English, except Jeremy Taylor." In point of thought, Ruskin often confessed himself the pupil of Carlyle; but hardly less is he so in respect to literary expression; and the Sage of Chelsea returned the compliment by declaring to Mr. Froude that many of Ruskin's utterances "pierced like arrows into my heart." We surely do not require the enthusiastic attes-

tation of Mathew Arnold, or George Eliot, or John Morley, or the rest, of Ruskin's transcendent position as a prose-writer; but if it be true, as indeed it is, that "Ruskin writes beautifully because he thinks beautifully, because his thoughts spring, like Pallas, ready armed," it was not because "the fashion of the armour costs him nothing," for his note-books exist, like the sketch-books of a painter, with beautiful descriptive sentences, sweetly turned and carefully moulded, ready for use when required, thus attesting the constant and almost excessive care, as well as the constructive method of his style.

Ruskin's own estimate of his work, in his comparison of it with Tennyson's, is delightful in its modesty, and sufficient testimony of his critical faculty, or, at least, unselfish appreciation. "As an illustrator of natural beauty Tennyson is far beyond anything I ever did or could have done," he says; and elsewhere declared that there is finer word-painting in the poet's "Brook" than can be found in all his own prose-writings put together. But, for all that, Ruskin is and must be regarded, by friend and foe alike, as the great modern master of English prose—the Magician of Coniston Lake.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARTIST.

A dozen years ago it might have been necessary to defend the position of Ruskin as an artist, or perhaps even primarily to inform the general public of the wondrous beauty to be found in his drawings. But since that time *éditions de luxe* have fully established his rank as one of the most exquisite draughtsmen, both with the point and in water-colour sketching, that the country has produced. His work is limited in extent, rarely completed, and never executed for public exhibition; but for manual skill, microscopic truth of observation, directed and moulded by a passionate poetic sense of the most refined and gentle order, he has rarely been excelled. He was, in truth, a landscape and architectural artist of the greatest talent, of infinite delicacy, grace, feeling, and patience; and the writer has more than once heard him deplore that he had not given a greater share of his life to the practice of art by which he might have effected more real good than by all his word-painting and pen-preaching: "Not

that I should have done anything great," said he, "but I could have made such beautiful records of things. It is one of the greatest chagrins of my life."

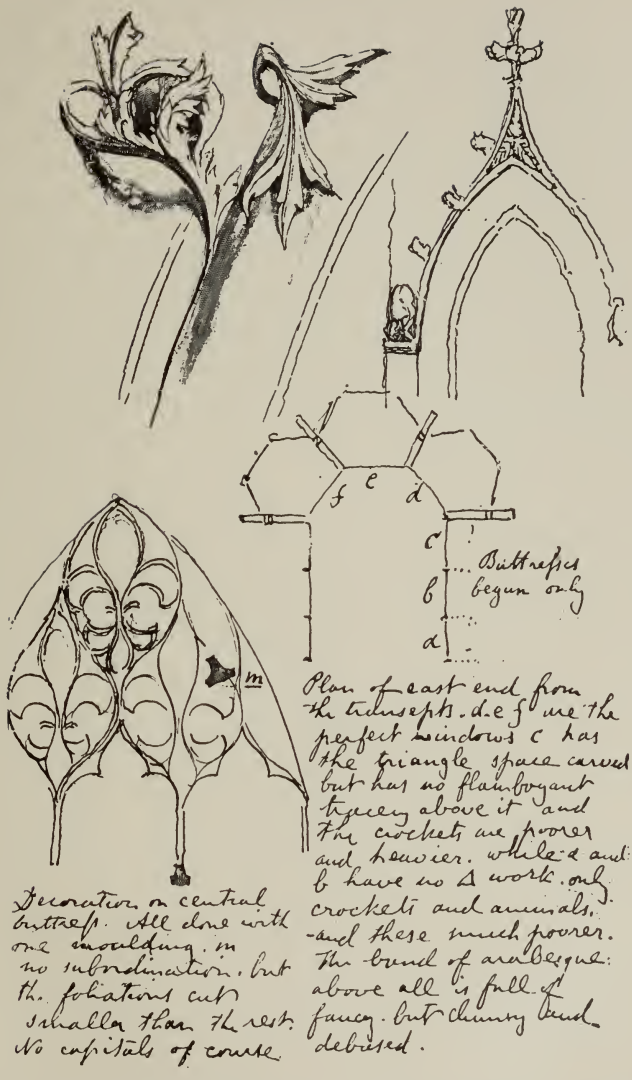
In respect to his theories of art, its technique, and execution, Ruskin entertained views which were not shared by the majority of the greatest painters of his day—even of most of his most intimate friends and admirers. Such, for example, was the theory that all shadows should be painted purple—a dictum which most of the *luministes* of later days, the very "polar contraries" of Ruskin, have widely adopted, though not perhaps to the full extent. Mr. Goodall, R.A., told me once of the surprise of Madame Rosa Bonheur when Ruskin laid down this proposition to her with all the firmness of conviction, and stoutly maintained through their crisp little discussion that thus should all her shadows be painted. "*Mais oui, m'a-t-il bien dit,*" said she, in repeating the conversation, "*rouge et bleu ;*" and she further declared that she was convinced that his views on this matter, as well as on his artistic work generally, were governed by a physical peculiarity of his retina, and that he possessed besides the microscopic eye of a bird: "*Il voit précisément comme un oiseau.*" This suggestion, so swiftly and deftly made, goes a good

way towards explaining Ruskin's love of exhaustive detail, the more accurately drawn and exquisitely finished the better; but it hardly tallies with the frequent breadth of handling and largeness of view to be found in his own work. Perhaps it was, in a measure, his early training in facsimile copying of great models that rendered him so precise, encouraged thereto by his own natural bent and genius for criticism and subtle analysis; but no less was it his scientific knowledge and his cultivated accuracy that served him so well in the making of his innumerable sketches of natural phenomena and artistic shorthand notes of every sort of detail, to say nothing of his profound study and elaborate drawings of architecture—geometrical as well as picturesque. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that his "Glacier des Bossons, Chamouni"—in which the ice is inimitably represented creeping down the hillside—with its exquisite drawing, its refinement and delicacy, and its beauty of sparkling colour, has never been surpassed in its own line by any artist however eminent.

His actual masters in art, it has already been said, were J. D. Harding (who was the first to inspire him with the idea that there was something more soulful and philosophic in art than appears upon the surface) and Copley Fielding.

Then came his love for Prout—he who above all others appreciated "Modern Painters" to the full when it first appeared. It was upon his manner that Ruskin loved to form his own, as may be seen in the early drawing of "The Cathedral Spire, Rouen" (reproduced on page 81) and in many another work of his early years. Of this "Rouen," by the way, published with two other drawings in the *Magazine of Art* in 1886, he wrote to me: "There ought to be a separate half-page of apology for the drawings of mine, in which the Rouen is a little bit too childish to show my proper early architectural power. All my really good drawings are too large—and most of them at Oxford; but I should like you to give one of them, some day."

He remained true to his "Proutism," which he cultivated so assiduously, to the end; for, speaking of his Brantwood drawings, he said: "Prout is one of the loves that always remain fresh to me; sometimes I tire of Turner, but never of Prout." To what extent Turner was his idol it is not necessary here to insist: for Turner practically came for many years to be Ruskin's *raison d'être*. Then followed his love for William Hunt and David Roberts; and on the work of all these men his own style of art was founded. But his approval of Roberts was



A PAGE OF ONE OF RUSKIN'S NOTE-BOOKS, MADE WHEN HE WAS PREPARING "THE STONES OF VENICE."

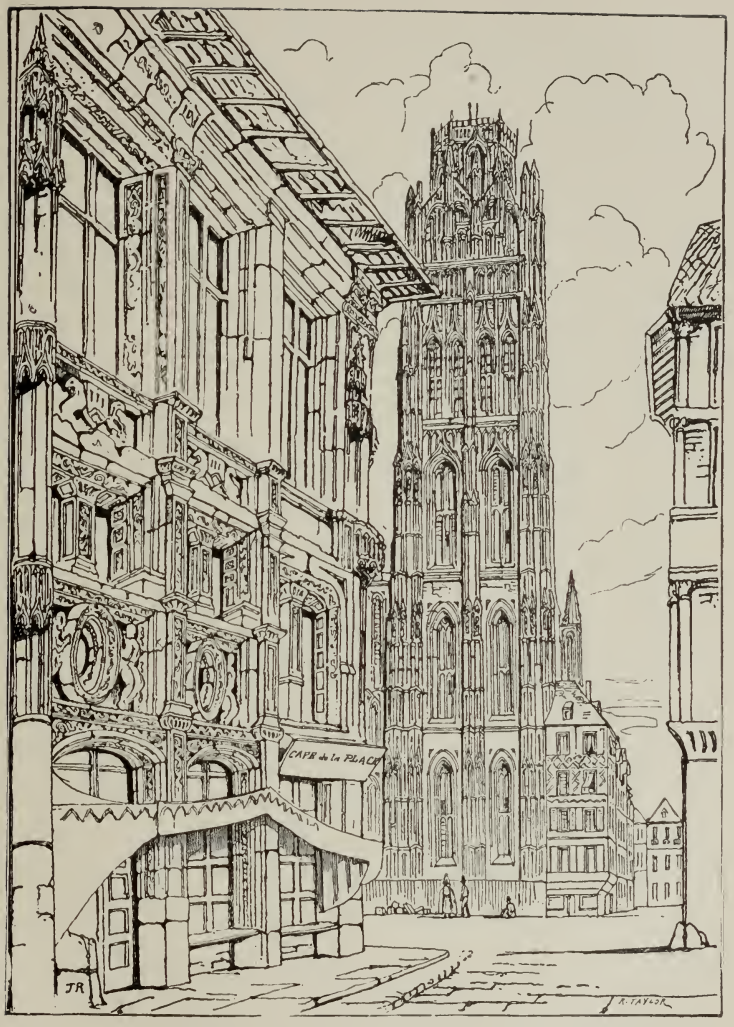
(By permission of Mrs. Arthur Severn.)

greatly modified by time and by Roberts' own development and change. The story is still recounted with a chuckle how Ruskin once felt it necessary to print a rather severe criticism upon Roberts' work, but wrote a private note expressing the hope that it might make no difference to their friendship, and how the artist replied that when next he met him he would punch Ruskin's head, but hoped that that would in no way disturb their pleasant and cordial relations.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEACHER.

The teaching of John Ruskin might for convenience sake be divided into Art and General Teaching, which together form a synthetic philosophy, erratic enough at first sight to a superficial observer, but consistent and focussed in aim when properly understood. Codified as has been his teaching by Mr. Collingwood, Mr. Cook, and minor disciples, it is simple and clear, its fundamental principles being honesty, piety, and sincerity in all things—in Art as in Ethics. A philosopher so impulsive and, at times, so hasty as Mr. Ruskin, writing more often, as it has been said, in the character of the pamphleteer than in that of the academist or pundit, naturally laid himself freely open to attack. Of this weakness advantage was from time to time fully taken by vigorous and pitiless assailants. A fighter of the Puritan sort—"as zealous, pugnacious, and self-sure a Protestant as you please," as he himself has expressed it—Ruskin hit hard, loving nothing



THE CATHEDRAL SPIRE, ROUEN.

DRAWN BY RUSKIN, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF PROUT.

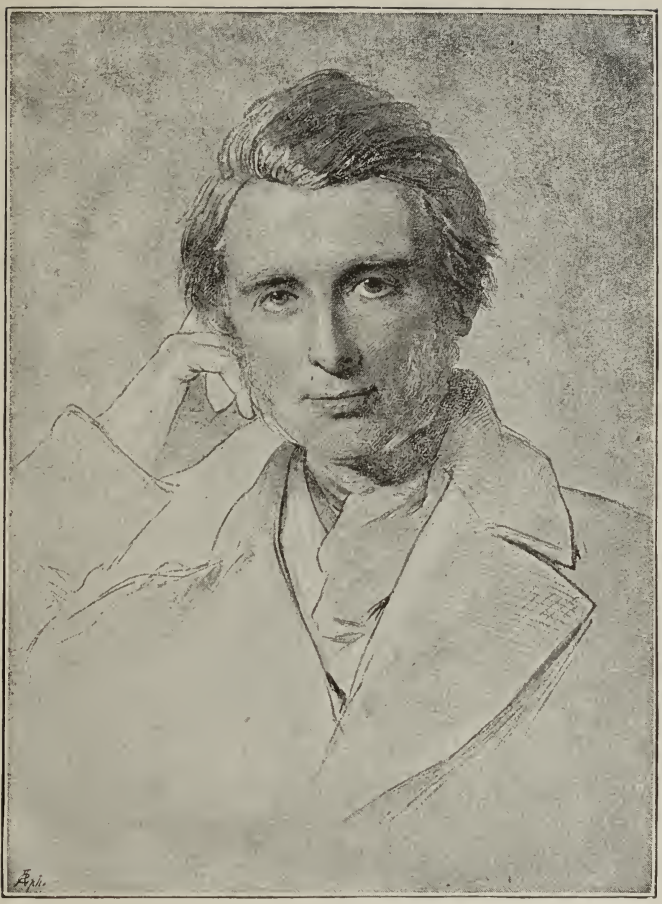
(*By permission of Mrs. Arthur Severn.*)

so much as to pillory acknowledged wrongs and conventional rights. He thus made for himself more enemies than most men, though not so many, perhaps, as he would had people not regarded him as something of a prophet of old, or as a hot-tempered enthusiast, whose seriously over-charged brain often carried him beyond the limits of soberer judgment and moderation. Rarely has an Englishman of letters been the subject of such a slashing and abusive attack as Ruskin but a few years since was the victim of at the hands of the *Quarterly Review*, and many others joined with interest in the campaign of retaliation. The development of his ideas with time and maturity of judgment placed a ready weapon in the hands of his opponents, which they were not slow to use; but more than once he has turned and emptied upon them with withering effect the vials of his wrath and scathing invective, which have few, if any, parallels in the language.

Early in his career he assumed the "apostolic attitude" in respect, not only to art, but to the whole principles of life. Applying the results of his thoughts and doctrines, he came to set up Religion and Ethics as in direct opposition to Science and Avarice; and there we have the philosophy of his early life in a nut-

shell. He was not long before he modified this view to a sensible degree; his Evangelical training began to fade before his kindlier sentiments, and loosened its uncompromising grip. But from the beginning to the end his motto was "All great art is praise;" and this he followed logically with the thesis that "the teaching of art is the teaching of all things." Art, he said, is to minister to a sense of beauty —a view which enabled him to bring nearly every subject within his net; and then, inversely, he taught that beauty in all things—actual, æsthetic, moral, and ethical—that was the end and aim of life. It was to the propagation of this idea that he set his mind—that mind which Mazzini declared was the most analytical in Europe; but the length to which he carried his arguments—such as that no man can be an architect who is not also a metaphysician—raised a veritable storm of criticism and dissent, upon which the young philosopher rode forward in triumph and delight.

George Eliot—who said "I venerate him as one of the great teachers of the age: he teaches with the inspiration of the Hebrew prophet"—saw no reason to contest his two leading doctrines—a Quixotic purity of commercial morality carried almost to the point of impracticability and stagnation, and a religious view of higher



JOHN RUSKIN, 1857.

FROM THE PORTRAIT IN COLOURED CHALK BY GEORGE RICHMOND, R.A.

(*By permission of Arthur Severn, Esq., R.I.*)

(*See p. 182.*)

art developed almost to the point of monastic exclusiveness and ethical fervour. His search after honesty and truth in Art enabled him to claim with pride that "it was left to me, and me alone, first to discern and then to teach—as far as in this hurried century any such thing *can* be taught—the excellence and supremacy of five great painters, despised until I spoke of them: Turner, Tintoret, Luini, Botticelli, and Carpaccio." But his happiness in the analysis and establishment of past triumphs in art rendered him the more dejected in the contemplation of what he considered was its present tendency in England. "I have only stopped grumbling," he exclaimed, "because I find that grumbling is of no use. I believe that all the genius of modern artists is directed to tastes which are in vicious states of wealth in cities, and that, on the whole, they are in the service of a luxurious class who must be amused, or worse than amused. There is twenty times more effort than there used to be, far greater skill, but far less pleasure in the exercise of it in the artists themselves. I may say that my chief feeling is that things are going powerfully to the bad, but that there may be something—no one knows how or when—which may start up and check it. Look at those drawings of Turner on the wall—there is nothing wrong in them;

but in every exhibition there *is* something wrong: the pictures are either too sketchy or too finished; there is something wrong with the man—up to the very highest."

In ordinary life he thought he discovered that manual labor and every effort of the body, to the exclusion of all mechanical assistance, was thrice-blessed, and the more highly sanctified the baser and more menial the office.

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

must have been more than once in his mind. And thus it was that he learned the art of crossing-sweeping in London from a knight of the broom, and the art of road-making too. It speaks eloquently for his power of persuasion and his sway over the affections of his pupils, that he brought the Oxford undergraduates, during his Slade professorship, to play the navvy, and with pick and spade to construct the Hincksey Road, to the delight and amusement of all the countryside. The road, I believe, is a very bad one, disgracefully so, save in that small portion to which Ruskin called in the professional help of his gardener; but it was made, and that was enough for him. The story—perhaps an apochryphal one—goes in Oxford that Mr. Andrew Lang was one of

the undergraduates; who, with a lurking suspicion as to the efficacy and rightness of the whole business, as well as with a lively sense of the ludicrous, used to take his pickaxe and drive down in a hansom to the scene of operations.

In fact, Muscle *versus* Machinery was one of the tenets of Ruskin's vital creed. He hated railways for three reasons: partly because they defaced the country and fouled the air; partly because they were usually constructed rather as a speculation (the immorality of gambling!), with the sole view not to utility, but to profit (the immorality of sordidness!); and chiefly because they wiped out the good old-fashioned travelling, with patience and industry, with thew and muscle. Railways, he said, if rightly understood, are but a device to make the world smaller; but he ignored the necessary corollary —that they made life longer and larger, at least to the traveller. When the abortive attempt was being made to pass a Bill for the Ambleside Railway through the Committee of the House, I had but to refer to the scheme which was to have brought the bane of his life into the very heart of the Lake district, to fire him at the bare mention of it. "Whenever I think of it," he cried warmly, "I get so angry that I begin to fear an attack of apoplexy. There is no hope for Ambleside; the place is

sure to be ruined beyond all that people imagine. It is no use my writing to the London papers on the matter, because it merely centres in the question, have they money enough to fight in the House of Commons? It does not matter what anybody says if the damaging party can pay expenses. There are perpetually people who are trying to get up railways in every direction, and as it now stands they unfortunately can find no other place to make money from. But it is no use attacking them; you might just as well expect mercy from a money-lender as expect them to listen to reason." Nor was his animosity towards the promoters in any way subdued by the failure of the attempt in Parliament. Even the decoration of the railway stations he condemned as an impertinence and an outrage on the art of design that was disgraced by the lowliness of its mission.

But Ruskin's hatred of railways was not so all-consuming nor so sweeping that he had no dislike and contempt left for that more recent form of mechanical self-transport—cycling, as he proved to a startled correspondent who sought for his opinion, and apparently his approval, on the subject. "I not only object," he wrote, "but am quite prepared to spend all my best 'bad language' in reprobation of bi- tri- 4- 5- 6-

or 7-cycles, and every other contrivance and invention for superseding human feet on God's ground. To walk, to run, to leap, and to dance are the Virtues of the human body, and neither to stride on stilts, wriggle on wheels, or dangle on ropes, and nothing in the training of the human mind with the body will ever supersede the appointed God's ways of slow walking and hard working."

Mr. William Morris rightly declared that Ruskin was the only man who, during the whole nineteenth century, made Art possible in England. Dr. Waldstein has placed him on an equal pedestal with Mathew Arnold as an apostle of culture. And, further, by proclaiming his service in combating the severance of morality and economics, in "killing the fetish of the Quartier Latin," and in inducing the love and study of nature and landscape-painting, he has awarded Ruskin the palm he so passionately sought for—the admission that he reached his goal. In short, as has been said, Ruskin stood midway between the religious and scientific lines of thought—as a theistic philosopher. And it is claimed for him that he inaugurated the era of scientific and methodical art-criticism, and ranged himself beside Carlyle, Emerson, and Hegel against the advancing materialism of the day.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EDUCATIONIST.

Upon no subject, even upon art or railways, did Ruskin entertain stronger views than upon education—more especially upon the education of the very young. Laying down primarily that little children should be taught or shown nothing that is sad and nothing that is ugly, he protested with all his vigour against the blind Three R's-system of all school education—particularly that of the School Board. And he further set his face against what he believed was the latter-day tendency of scientific or economic study amongst our youth, to the end and conclusion "that their fathers were apes and their mothers winkles; that the world began in accident, and will end in darkness; that honour is a folly, ambition a virtue, charity a vice, poverty a crime, and rascality the means of all wealth and the sum of all wisdom." As usual, his earnestness in asseveration and felicity in expression carried him a little too far; but it certainly presented his views with considerable accuracy.

Few people applied to him in vain for assistance and advice on the subject of school-teaching; and with his advice there often came something more substantial in the way of materials for object-lessons. The Cork High School for Girls is one of the several establishments which benefited in this way, receiving a gift of minerals of high value accompanied by a characteristic descriptive catalogue. To Mrs. Magnussen, again, Ruskin expressed the deep interest he felt in her high school for girls in Ireland, and besought her to "teach your children to be cheerful, busy, and honest; teach them sewing, music, and cookery; and if they want bonnets from Paris—why, you'll have to send for them." And many a time the village school of Coniston has known his presence during school hours, and reaped advantage and amusement from his kindly interference.

As soon as the child has been taught to learn, not only with its eyes and ears, but with its lips and tongue and skin (the latter by the appointed daily washing, to say nothing of "thrashing—delicately—on due occasion"), its time is to be gradually occupied with the teaching of the natural sciences, as against mere reading and writing. Physical science, botany, the elements of music, astronomy, and zoology—these are

the subjects to be included in a system which is to know no over-pressure, and which, by its course of study, precludes the possibility of writing folly for the attraction of other infantile fools, or the reading of pestilential popular literature and "penny dreadfuls" to the reader's ruin. Drawing and history, according to the Ruskinian system, were to be compulsory subjects. The school-house, with garden, playground, and cultivable land round it, wherever possible, should have workshops —a carpenter's and a potter's—a children's library, where scholars who want to read might teach themselves without troubling the masters; and "a sufficient laboratory always, in which shall be specimens of all common elements of natural substances, and where chemical, optical, and pneumatic experiments may be shown." And to these subjects, others—which should not be extras: "the laws of Honour, the habit of Truth, the Virtue of Humility, and the Happiness of Love."

And coming later to the ordinary University course and University teaching, Ruskin besought his students to confine themselves to the regular curriculum. But as for languages —their own and foreign—he told them to learn the former at home, and the others in

the various countries; "and, after they've learned all they want, learn wholesomely to hold their tongues, except on extreme occasions, in all languages whatsoever."

CHAPTER VII.

HIS VIEW OF THINGS.

Ruskin's originality and invariable happiness of expression drew, perhaps, undue public attention to his versatility and views of things in general, and he was listened to with pleasure by adversaries, as by friends and followers. His theory of political economy was too ideal to be acceptable to the work-a-day world; yet his "Time and Tide" and "Ethics of the Dust" gained no small share of approval from non-capitalists. With Palmerston, Gladstone, and Disraeli, Ruskin contested for these opinions in vigorous conversation; though, as he himself admitted, with but little effect. For Palmerston gently remonstrated with him; Gladstone hotly argued, and Disraeli cynically chaffed him: but Ruskin held on—the precise attitude that might have been expected from the character and dispositions of the four men. On this subject he remained firm; "my political teaching," he said, "has never changed in a single thought or word, and, being that of Homer and Plato, is little likely to do so, though not acceptable to a country whose

JOHN RUSKIN, 1866.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY ELLIOTT & FRY.

milkmaids cannot make butter, nor her blacksmiths bayonets."

Ardent in all things, he was an ardent, though inactive, politician; but he was strongly opposed to government by party, being convinced that the ablest men should be in the positions for which they were best suited. "I care no more for Mr. D'Israeli or Mr. Gladstone than for two old bagpipes with the drones going by steam," he once wrote; "but I hate all Liberalism as I do Beelzebub, and, with Carlyle, I stand, we two alone now in England, for God and the Queen." This is on all-fours with the sentiment he once imparted to me, and which at the time it was my duty to make known to the world: "There is one political opinion I *do* entertain, and that is that Mr. Gladstone is an old wind-bag, who uses his splendid gifts of oratory not for the elucidation of a subject, but for its vaporisation in a cloud of words" —a sentiment, he told me afterwards, which had given the greatest offence to Miss Gladstone, of whom he was so fond, and now she wouldn't look at him! "I am not a Liberal —quite the Polar contrary of that. I am, and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school (Walter Scott's school);" and again, "I am a violent Illiberal, but it

does not follow that I must be a Conservative. I want to keep the fields of England green and her cheeks red."

In one of his lighter moods he wrote to a friend concerning the proposed erection of a new public office:—"If I were he [the architect] I would build Lord P—— an office with all the capitals upside down, and tell him it was in the Greek style, inverted, to express typically Government by party—up to-day, down to-morrow." And on another occasion:—"I beg of you, so far as you think of me, not to think of me as a Tory, or as in any wise acknowledging party principles;" and, finally, declaring himself what amounts to a limited Home Ruler, he piously proclaimed himself a believer in "the minority of One!"

There seems to be good ground for the belief that, had not Art claimed Ruskin for her own, his love of Nature would have been diverted into scientific channels. Dr. Buckland and James Forbes had done much with him, and as he believed and said with perfect candour, he might have become the first geologist in Europe. Geology, mineralogy, meteorology —glacier movements, mountains, rocks, clouds, and perspective, birds and plants, all severally engaged his attention, and to good purpose enlisted his highest powers. But for all that,

he hated mathematics; and having once learned, with the rest of the children at the Coniston school, how much seven-and-twenty pounds of bacon would come to at ninepence farthing a pound, "with sundry the like marvellous consequences of the laws of numbers," he stopped the mistress and diverted the delighted children's attention to object-lessons more picturesque, and, as he believed, more interesting and useful. Yet his contributions to science are not altogether insignificant, and Mr. Tyndall had cause to wince under his lash when he opposed the glacier-theory of James Forbes, and, as Ruskin himself told me with unusual bitterness, "put back the glacier-theory twenty years and more—a theory which had been decided before that conceited, careless schoolboy was born! Scientists!" he cried, "but not men of science. They are not students of science, but *dilettanti* in the enjoyment of its superficial aspects. They do not examine and analyse the milk; they only sip at the cream, and then chatter about it. They are of the race that say 'Keltic' for 'Celtic,' and 'Keramic' for 'Ceramic,' at once the makers and the followers of fashion in Science, and not, as they should be, the servants of God, and the humble masters of the universe." The Darwinian theory, as I have already said, was in a measure hateful to

him; yet few men he esteemed more than the author of it. To the last he remembered with delight the visits of the great naturalist to Brantwood, and was perhaps not a little grateful for the tact with which all reference to debateable matters was carefully avoided.

In religion Ruskin may be described as a Broad Churchman; earnest and pious, but no bigot, as the following passage, extracted from a private letter, will show:—"If people in this world would but teach a little less religion and a little more common honesty, it would be much more to everybody's purpose—and to God's." As a child he was brought up in the Evangelical faith, but soon became more catholic and indulgent, and looked with horror on the more intolerant attitude of Protestantism or Puritanism, and with scorn upon sects and schisms alike and their belittling quarrels. Still, as before and later, religion in its larger sense was the forerunning and guiding principle of his life—the passion that directed every act and moulded every thought. Love, Faith, Charity, and Honour were the four boundaries of his Church—a Church which was broad enough to cover every noble mind and every honest heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LETTER-WRITER.

One of the most delightful of Ruskin's talents was that of letter-writing, his natural bent for which was developed and perfected by continual practice. But his art was not that of the great literary epistolographers. It aimed less, in point of fact, at literary quality and formal composition (though it did not less for that reason hit the mark) than at vivacity of manner and frank expression of his thoughts as they took form in his brain and bubbled sparkling and flowing from his pen—now in the ripple of boyish playfulness, now in the stiller sweep of philosophic thought, and now again in the torrent of hot indignation that overwhelmed his adversaries in their flood. To the public journals he was a prolific correspondent, from the time when, in 1847 and again in 1853, he addressed long letters to the *Times* on the dangers threatening the National Gallery—to the dissipation of which dangers he was able long years afterwards to testify—down to a quite recent period. The

Times, but particularly the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, were his favourite newspaper channels of communication with the public, but the *Morning Post*, the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Scotsman*, the *Manchester City News*, the *Reader*, the *Critic*, the *Literary Gazette*, the *Monetary Gazette*, and other journals were selected by him from time to time for the exposition of his views upon almost every subject within the extended range of his philosophy. Yet if he was a prolific newspaper letter-writer it must not be imagined that he was necessarily, therefore, a rapid one. On the contrary, he more than once, to me as well as to others, remarked upon the labour which the inditing and publishing of such productions entailed upon him. In a postscript to a letter addressed to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1887, Mr. Ruskin wrote:—

"I have not written this letter with my usual care, for I am at present tired and sad; but you will enough gather my meaning in it; and may I pray your kindness, in any notice you may grant in continuation of 'Præterita,' to contradict the partly idle, partly malicious rumours which I find have got into other journals, respecting my state of health this spring. Whenever I write a word that my friends don't like, they say I am crazy; and never consider what a cruel and wicked form of libel they thus pro-

voke against the work of an old age in all its convictions antagonistic to the changes of the times, and in all its comfort oppressed by them;"

—a most pathetic and, as the Editor truly commented, "sad undernote of weariness" in respect to a charge to which all great original thinkers have been exposed at the hands of commonplace people "from St. Paul to General Gordon."

All these newspaper letters, from 1841 up to 1880, together with a few others, were reprinted in "Arrows of the Chace," wherein, it must be remarked, the writer asserts, with inexplicable self-contradiction, that most of them were "written hastily," though he admits that they cost him much trouble. And he further declared, what, indeed, every man can see for himself, that in these letters, "designed for his country's help," there is not one word which "has been warped by interest nor weakened by fear," and that they are "as pure from selfish passion as if they were spoken already out of another world."

It is clear that letter-writing came with singular ease to Ruskin, for it allowed him an unconventionality of composition and expression and a forcefulness of diction that would, perhaps, have been less permissible in the more customary methods of essay writing.

For this reason, doubtless, "Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne" was frankly thrown into epistolary form, or left in it, precisely as the five-and-twenty letters of which the book is composed were indited to Mr. Thomas Dixon, of Sunderland; while "The Elements of Drawing," and even "Fors Clavigera," were in like manner issued in Ruskin's favourite form of public address.

Apart from his letters immediately intended for publication in the newspapers, there were those he addressed to the comparatively unknown correspondents who sought his help and advice in their private affairs, or inquired his opinions upon every sort of subject of public curiosity; and those, again, which he distributed with so generous a hand among his private friends and relations. How many of all these letters have found their way into print it is unnecessary to point out or inquire. Ruskin's own general statement that "I never write what I would not allow to be published," and his general declaration, duly printed in the newspapers, that all were free to publish every letter he ever wrote, "so that they print the whole of them," was confirmed by him in a characteristic letter which he wrote to James Smetham, and which was printed in the fascinating volume of "Letters" of that artist. "I

have had," wrote Smetham on one occasion, "some kind letters from Ruskin, one giving me leave to print anywhere or anyhow any opinion he may have expressed about my work in private letters, in bits or wholes, or how I like, and concluding by a very characteristic sentence: 'I never wrote a private letter to any human being which I would not let a bill-sticker chalk up six feet high on Hyde Park wall, and stand myself in Piccadilly and say "I did it."'" Thus it is that Ruskin encouraged a system of general publicity which certainly has done his reputation no harm, while it enlivened the columns of the public press with a pyrotechnic sequence of letters, delightfully and often enough fervently expressed—contributions for which newspaper-readers felt themselves duly grateful.

Of the private letters, the most notable collection is that before, referred to, which was addressed to Miss Beever—the Younger Lady of Thwaite, to whom the world is indebted for the charming selection from Modern Painters known as "Frondes Agrestes." A smaller selection was more recently published for private circulation by Mr. Ellis, the bookseller—a collection containing much that is pleasant and interesting, bearing chiefly on Ruskin's knowledge and love of books, but

hardly edited with the solicitude demanded by the reputation of a great writer. Few men declare themselves completely in their literary work, so that the publication of their letters is always looked to for the explanation of otherwise inexplicable problems presented by their character, to throw light upon unguessed motives, or even to tear from their face the mask that the heroes have laboured all their life to mould and wear with the ease of truth. With Ruskin it is different. His writings declare the man in his weakness as in his strength, simply and fully, drawing a careful outline, so to speak, that leaves little to be filled into the portrait, and requires no further evidence to enable his fellow-men to form their judgment. It is chiefly confirmatory evidence that his letters afford—presented with a light hand to fill in the main lines laid down in his books—illustrating, developing, and representing the author in a stronger light, only a good deal more light-hearted or more depressed; and at the same time bringing into greater relief the dominating qualities of charity and love which those who knew him best saw oftenest and esteemed highest.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POET.

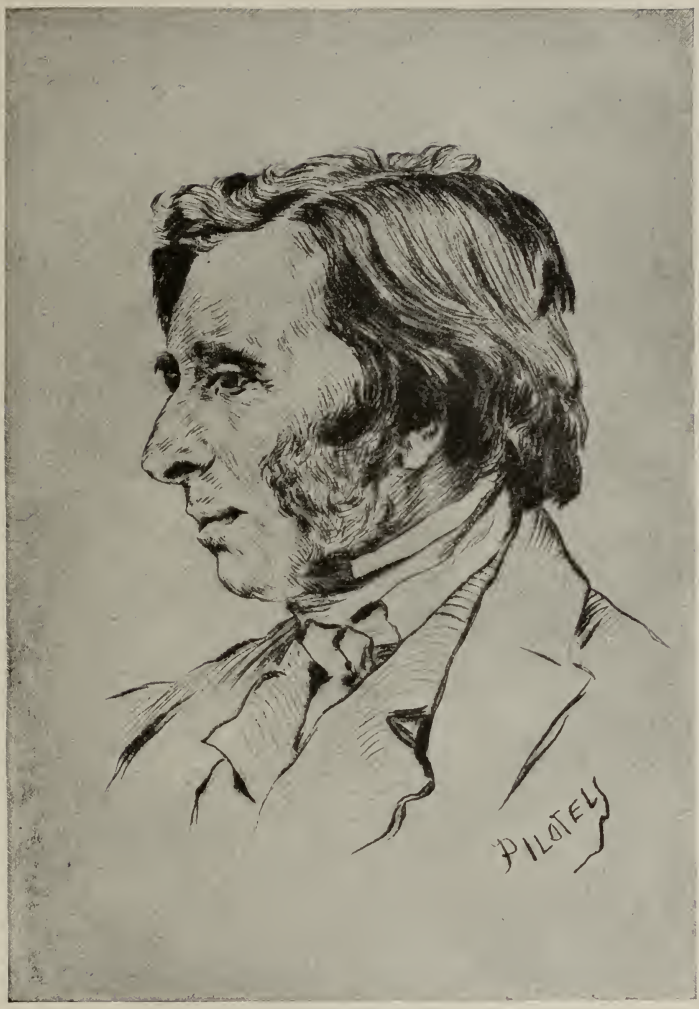
Ruskin, as has already been said, was intended for the Church. His mother—strict Evangelical soul—devoutly hoped that her son would become a Bishop; his father firmly believed he would be a poet. And though Ruskin belied both prophecies, it must be admitted that he gave ample ground for the paternal conviction. His facility in verse-making was amazing, and from those tender years when, still a baby, he wrote the imaginative lines beginning—

> "Papa, how pretty those icicles are,
> That are seen so near, that are seen so far,"

he, in a short time, developed such fluency that few writers of verse of any age could excel him in the direction of fatal "facility." His literary prose style, as we have seen, had been founded on the Bible and Dr. Johnson, tempered by Carlyle; his poetic Muse was nourished on Byron, guided by Wordsworth, and modified by Scott. As he himself wrote in a tone of apology to Hogg, the Ettrick Shep-

herd, when but fifteen years of age: "I fear you are too lenient a critic, and that Mr. Marshall is in the right when he says I have imitated Scott and Byron. I have read Byron with wonder, and Scott with delight; they have caused me many a day-dream and night-dream, and it is difficult to prevent yourself from imitating what you admire. I can only say that the imitation was unintentional, but I fear, with me, almost unavoidable." Yet, to his infinite credit, it must be confessed that he early saw that his drift into art-criticism carried him into the right stream. Nevertheless, although the *feu sacré* burned brightly within him, although he heard on all sides that none had written such poetic prose as he, and although his sensitiveness to nature and beauty was universally allowed him, he soon recognised that, as with Lord Lytton, poetry was to him but a will-o'-the-wisp—to be wooed and followed, but never, like Fata Morgana, to be seized.

Yet, though he thus tacitly admitted, while yet a stripling, that verse was not the weapon with which he was to conquer the recognition of the world, he made no objection to the republication of his poems by Mr. Collingwood. Their issue, in splendid garb, with many admirable facsimiles of the Master's most beautiful drawings with pencil-point and brush, will be



JOHN RUSKIN, 1876.

SKETCHED IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY BY GEORGES PILOTELLE.

(*By permission of Mr. Noseda, the owner of the copyright of the etching.*)

(*See p. 186.*)

fresh in the memory of the reader. It might be said, and not without truth, that the pictures formed the chief artistic value of the volumes; for, while the poems—with all their pretty daintiness and occasional power—savoured a good deal of the efforts of the precocious poet, the pictures were full of richness of fancy, exquisiteness of touch, and true beauty—the attributes of natural genius. The humour which distinguishes his unfinished autobiography, "Præterita," is often slyly pointed at his youthful indiscretions—poetical and otherwise; but in his "Collected Poems" the verses were put forth with a seriousness—almost a solemnity—which is a little out of balance with the subject. For, while the verse-lover may smile in sympathy with his dainty fancies, or fires, maybe, with noble suggestions, or nods his head gently in time to its musical cadences, the critic can but regret that a maturer judgment permitted them to go forth as the poetical works of a great man, for all the exquisite beauty of their pictorial accompaniments. He brought as a sacrifice the harvest of his intellectual wild oats to the altar of public opinion; but it is doubtful if he cared for the verdict—if he ever knew of it. As in other instances, his shaft had missed its aim. Just as a comedian yearns for recognition as an actor of tragedy,

so Ruskin ever sought for some other judgment than that which an admiring public chose to pass upon him. The people proclaim him an art-critic, and he would be taken for a political economist; the artists welcome him as a writer, and he would be taken for an art-preacher; Mr. Tyndall respected him as a controversialist, when he would be taken for a man of science; and, lastly, we find him applauded as an artist when he would be taken for a poet! But it must be remembered that it was from his young and hopeful heart that these poems chiefly flowed, even when he set himself—as he once amusingly observed—"in a state of magnificent imbecility to write a tragedy on a Venetian subject, in which Venice and love were to be described as never had been thought of before!" If, however, for no other reason than that it is the frank utterance of a young and gentle spirit, his verse—so sweetly, so nobly conceived—is to be welcomed beyond its inherent merit. And, as it fell out, his song—published just as he was vanishing from the world—became in truth the song of the swan

CHAPTER X.

RUSKIN AND GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

There was no pleasanter phase of Ruskin's character, as has been already said, than his charity, delicately dispensed, especially when the recipient was worthy of his gift, and at the same time claimed his respect. An example in point is Ruskin's connection with George Cruikshank in the artist's later days. The relation of the circumstances at an interesting period of their connection affords a plain instance of the generosity of Ruskin, no less than of his refusal to allow his sympathy of sentiment to overcloud his faculty of criticism.

Many a time had Ruskin borne testimony to Cruikshank's genius as a designer, as well as to his almost unrivalled skill and facility as an etcher.

"If ever [he wrote] you happen to meet with two volumes of Grimm's 'German Stories,' which were illustrated by George Cruikshank long ago, pounce upon them instantly; the etchings in them are the finest things, next to Rembrandt's, that, as far as I know, have been done since etching was invented."

And again :—

"They are of quite sterling and admirable art, in a class precisely parallel in elevation to the character of the tales they illustrate . . . unrivalled in masterfulness of touch since Rembrandt (in some qualities of delineation unrivalled even by him). To make somewhat enlarged copies of them, looking at them through a magnifying glass, and never putting two lines where Cruikshank has put only one, would be an exercise in decision and severe drawing which would leave afterwards little to be learned in schools."

Of course, it is not only, or even mainly, upon the Grimm plates that Cruikshank's reputation rests as an etcher and a humorist of the highest order; for in several of his caricatures —coarse as many of the subjects may be— there are a boldness and a freedom of composition and execution which are perfectly astonishing, even to the expert connoisseur in these things. But it was always the Grimm plates— executed about the year 1824—that were uppermost in Ruskin's mind. More than forty years later Ruskin conceived an idea, partly in order to be of use to Cruikshank—who (greatly through his own fault, be it said) never knew what assured prosperity meant—and partly to please little children, whom he loved so well. This was to place before the little people a book of fairy-tales—fairy-tales just such as they should be, and adorned with pictures exactly fitting the stories. Not until he issued "Dame Wiggins of Lee," in 1885, did he even par-

tially fulfil his wish; but in 1866 he went to considerable trouble to carry his object into execution. On the 27th of March he wrote to his secretary from Denmark Hill:—

"How curious all that is about the Grimm plates. I wish you would ask Cruikshank whether he thinks he could execute some designs from fairy-tales—of my choosing, of the same size, about, as these vignettes, and with a given thickness of etching line; using *no* fine line anywhere?"

The reservation was a wise one, for the vigour and excellence of Cruikshank's etched line had degenerated sadly as he reached middle life. On the 2nd of the following month, full of his new project, and fully decided in his mind as to what he wanted and meant to have, Ruskin wrote again:—

"I don't want to lose an hour in availing myself of Mr. Cruikshank's kindness, but I am puzzled, as I look at the fairy tales within my reach, at their extreme badness. The thing I shall attempt will be a small collection of the best and simplest I can find, re-touched a little, with Edward's help, and with as many vignettes as Mr. Cruikshank will do for me. One of the stories will certainly be the Pied Piper of Hamelin—but, I believe, in prose. I can only lay hand just now on Browning's rhymed rendering of it, but that will do for the subject. I want the piper taking the children to Koppelberg Hill—a nice little rout of funny little German children—not too many for clearness of figure—and a bit of landscape with the raven opening in the hillside—but all simple and bright and clear—with broad lines: the landscape in 'Curdken running after his

Hat,' for instance—or the superb bit with the cottage in 'Thumbling picked up by the Giant,' are done with the kind of line I want; and I should like the vignette as small as possible, full of design and neat, not a labour of light and shade.

"I would always rather have two small vignettes than one large one. And I will give *any* price that Mr. Cruikshank would like, but he must forgive me for taking so much upon me as to make the thick firm line a *condition*, for I cannot bear to see his fine hand waste itself in scratching middle tints and covering mere spaces, as in the Cinderella and other later works. The 'Peewit' vignette, with the people jumping into the lake, I have always thought one of the very finest things ever done in pure line. It is so bold, so luminous, so intensely real, so full of humour, and expression, and character to the last dot.

"I send you my Browning marked with the subject at page 315, combining one and two; and, perhaps, in the distance there might be the merest suggestion of a Town Council—3. . but I leave this wholly to Mr. Cruikshank's feeling.

"Please explain all this to him, for I dare not write to him these impertinences without more really heartfelt apology than I have time, or words, to-day to express.

"Ever affectionately yours,

"J. RUSKIN."

On the 7th of the same month Ruskin returned to the subject:—

"I was so busy and tired yesterday I couldn't write another note. That is capital and very funny about the Pied Piper. Your subjects are all good as good can be, but I doubt we can't afford more than one to each story, and the final one is here the best. Please tell me of any other stories and subjects that chance to you."

Two days later, with the jovial spirit of a Cheeryble Brother strong within him, he wrote again :—

"I do not know anything that has given me so much pleasure for a long time as the thought of the feeling with which Cruikshank will read this list of his committee. You're a jolly fellow—you are, and I'm very grateful to you, and ever affectionately yours,

"J. RUSKIN.

"I enclose Cruikshank's letter, which is very beautiful. I think you must say £100 (a hundred) for me."

And on the 16th of April he wrote :—

"Letter just received—so many thanks. It's delightful about Cruikshank."

So, everything being settled, the artist went steadily to work, and in the month of July following, Ruskin wrote with enthusiasm :—

"I can only say to-day that I'm delighted about all these Cruikshank matters, and if the dear old man will do anything he likes more from the old Grimms it will be capital. Edward and Morris and you and I will choose the subjects together."

Meanwhile he saw and became enthusiastic over other work of the great etcher's, and once more wrote to his secretary, on the 2nd of September, to tell him so :—

"I am wholly obliged to you for these Cruikshanks. The Jack Shepherd [*sic*] one is quite awful, and a miracle of skill and command of means. The others are all splendid in their way; the morning one with the far-away street

I like the best. The officials with the children are glorious too; withering, if one understands it. But who does, or ever did? The sense of loss and rarity of all good art—*until we are better people*—increases in us daily."

A few days later he suggested:—

"Wouldn't Cruikshank choose himself subjects out of Grimm? If not, to begin with, the old soldier who has lost his way in a wood, comes to a cottage with a light in it shining through the trees. At its door is a witch spinning, of whom he asks lodging. She says, 'He must dig her garden, then.'"

At this time a missing etching was returned to him, and he wrote:—

"I forgot to thank you for the Cruikshank plate of fairies. I lost it out of the book when I was a boy, and am heartily glad to have it in again. The facsimiles are most interesting, as examples of the *im*-measurably little things on which life and death depend in work—a fatal truth—forced on me too sharply, long ago, in my own endeavours to engrave Turner."

The facsimiles referred to here were an extraordinary series of reproductions—"forgeries" some collectors chose to declare them—which a French artist made of the Grimm plates. So fine are they that it is only by one or two minor points, as well as by the colour of the ink in which they are printed, that the difference between the genuine plates and the copies can be detected. And this, it must be remembered, was long before the means of

photographing a design upon copper was discovered. Disappointment, however, was soon to follow. The plates were delivered; but brought the following charming letter from Ruskin—a letter as truthful in its criticism as it is gentle and happy in its choice of expression :—

"The etching will not do. The dear old man has dwelt on serious and frightful subjects, and cultivated his conscientiousness till he has lost his humour. He may still do impressive and moral subjects, but I know by this group of children that he can do fairy tales no more.

"I think he might quite well do still what he would feel it more his duty to do—illustrations of the misery of the streets of London. He knows that, and I would gladly purchase the plates at the same price.

"Ever affectionately yours, J. RUSKIN.

"Give my dear love to Mr. Cruikshank, and say, if he had been less kind and good, his work now would have been fitter for wayward children, but that his lessons of deeper import will be incomparably more precious if he *cares* to do them. But he must not work while in the country."

Disappointed as he was, Ruskin determined that the artist should not share his mortification, and on the 19th November he wrote :—

"I am going to write to Rutter [Ruskin's *homme d'affaires*] to release Cruikshank from the payment of that hundred—he gave some bonds which may be useful to him, and I shall put the hundred down, as I said I would, to the testimonial."

The sequel of the plates is not without

interest as having drawn from Ruskin a later criticism on Cruikshank's work which may fitly be recorded here. As a Cruikshank collector, I was aware that the two plates of the Pied Piper and the Old Soldier had disappeared from Ruskin's possession; and having further ascertained that some of his late secretary's effects had long before found their way to the hands of various dealers, I applied myself to discover them, if possible. By good fortune I lighted upon them, nearly twenty years after they were executed and years after they were "lost," and I had the pleasure of placing them in the possession of their rightful owner. In a letter acknowledging the receipt of them he wrote:—

"It was precisely because Mr. Cruikshank *could not* return to the manner of the Grimm plates, but etched too finely and shaded too much, that our project came to an end. I have no curiosity about the plates . . . I never allow such things to trouble me, else I should have vexation enough. There's a lovely plate of "Stones of Venice"—*folio* size—lost these twenty years!

"Ever faithfully yours,

"J. RUSKIN."

Writing a few days later, on the 21st January, 1884, in response to a suggestion of mine that his latest criticism on Cruikshank might be interesting to the public, he wrote:—

"It is a pleasure to me to answer your obliging letter with full permission to use my note on Cruikshank in any way you wish, and to add, if you care to do so, the expression of my perpetually increasing wonder at the fixed love of *ugliness* in the British soul which renders the collective works of three of our greatest men—Hogarth, Bewick, and Cruikshank—totally unfit for the sight of women and children, and fitter for the furniture of gaols and pigstyes than of the houses of gentlemen and gentlewomen.

"In Cruikshank the disease was connected with his incapacity of colour; but Hogarth and Bewick could both paint.

"It may be noticed in connection with the matter that Gothic grotesque sculpture is far more brutal in England than among the rudest continental nations; and the singular point of distraction is that such ugliness on the Continent is only used with definitely vicious intent by degraded artists; but with us it seems the main amusement of the virtuous ones!

"Ever faithfully yours,

"J. RUSKIN."

There can be no doubt that Ruskin's condemnation of the ugliness or extreme impropriety in some of the works of the artists he named is entirely just. But that must be borne in mind which Ruskin, in his impatience of everything that was vile or ugly, unfairly ignored—that the works he denounces were produced, with all their coarseness and vulgarity of sentiment and colour, to suit the taste and satisfy the demand of our great-grandfathers, with whom grossness often passed for wit and

extravagance for humour; and that it was their very aptitude for distortion and for investing their subject with "brutality" which enabled such lesser lights as Williams, Woodward, and Bunbury to take equal rank in our ancestors' estimation with giants such as Gillray, Rowlandson, and "the inimitable George Cruikshank."

CHAPTER XI.

BRANTWOOD.

Brantwood, the chosen lake-side home of Ruskin during the last quarter-century of his life, occupies one of the most favoured spots in all England. Set in the background of a half-encircling wood of exquisite grace and mystic beauty, as seen in the green half-light of its tranquil shade, and protected from the east winds by the open moorland that stretches away still further to the rear, it faces a long slope of lawn that sweeps down to Coniston Water's edge.

Behind—the moor, with the water of its overflowing wells running swiftly down the rocks with all the fuss of a real cascade; and the exalted rock of "Naboth," rising on the outskirts of the estate, which Ruskin loved to climb that he might gaze upon a wider view; and then, still higher, the great expanse of green and purple moor which game-birds haunt down to the very limits of the wood itself. And at its foot the fishing pond and the soft green turf of the natural amphitheatre.

In front—the narrow lake, sparkling in the sun and blue as the waters of the Rhone or of Thun, or grey and ruffling to the breeze that sweeps swiftly across the lake, tossing Mr. Severn's sailing boats as they lie at anchor close by the little creek, or thwarting them and their skipper as they seek their moorings on a squally day. Then the rising banks beyond of broken green, with white-faced houses blinking behind their trees, and the quiet, grey village nestling away to the right; and the Old Man of Coniston himself, towering above the smaller hills that close like guards around his knees.

To the left, the road that skirts the shore loses itself quickly among the trees; but the full length of the lake itself is seen away down to where the water gleams beyond Peel Island five miles and more away.

Upon such a view, with its range of hills draped in hanging cloud and clinging mists, or clear cut against the summer sky, would Ruskin stand and gaze, peering beneath his hand when the light was strong, many times a day; never tiring of the ever-changing scene, and finding in it a reminiscence of his beloved Alps, and deriving real consolation when his days of travel were complete.

In the midst of this land of delight Brantwood stands, once the house of Mr. W. J.

BRANTWOOD FROM CONISTON LAKE.

DRAWN BY ARTHUR SEVERN, R.I.

Linton, the great wood-engraver. How Ruskin acquired it, he has himself amusingly told: "Then Brantwood was offered me, which I bought, without seeing it, for fifteen hundred pounds (the fact being that I have no time to see things, and must decide at a guess, or not act at all). Then the house at Brantwood—a mere shed of rotten timber and loose stone—had to be furnished. . . The repairs also proving worse than complete rebuilding. . . I got myself at last seated at my tea-table, one summer, with my view of the lake—for a net four thousand pounds all told. I afterwards built a lodge, nearly as big as the house, for a married servant, and cut and terraced a kitchen garden cut out of the 'steep wood'—another two thousand transforming themselves thus into 'utilities embodied in material objects.'" So that he estimated the value in 1877 at five thousand pounds. But since then Brantwood, with its new buildings, has grown steadily up the hill, and wells have been sunk and the place improved with new rooms south and north and east, until it distinctly "rambles," comfortably and cheerfully, more than ever it "rambled" before.

Entering from the private road, which afterwards disappears through an archway beneath the house and the outbuildings, the visitor finds

himself in a square hall, remarkable chiefly for being hung with cartoon-drawings by Mr. Burne-Jones, and other pictures besides. On the left lies the old dining-room, where visitors were permitted to smoke after the Professor had retired for the night; in front the passage leading to the large dining-room—specially constructed with a great number of windows for the sake of the view—on the walls of which hang those portraits of Ruskin by Northcote, to which reference will be made later on. Here also are the portraits of Ruskin's parents by the same artist, that of the father being incontestably the finer of the two; and above the fireplace that splendid Titian, "A Doge of Venice," which played the prominent part of dumb witness in the trial of "Whistler *versus* Ruskin;" and beside it a most interesting autographic portrait of Turner, duly inscribed *suâ manu* and wrought, with all its delightful errors of draughtsmanship, when the artist was but sixteen years of age.

Doubling sharply to the right after entering the street door is the drawing-room. Bookcases full of best editions of the best books—his own and others'—and displaying notable bindings, stand against the walls, Scott's novels and historical and critical works in quite a variety of sizes appearing to preponderate. Charac-

JOHN RUSKIN, 1877.

FROM THE BUST BY BENJAMIN CRESWICK.

(*See p. 188.*)

teristically enough, one edition of his works does not bear the surname upon their richly-bound backs, but "Sir Walter" only, suggesting the familiar reverence in which Ruskin held the author whose "every word," he insisted, should be included among the "Hundred Best Books." Exquisite examples of Prout's pencil drawings, of Burne-Jones ("Fair Rosamund"), and of Ruskin's own beautiful studies of the interior of St. Mark's at Venice —one of them, perhaps, the most important of all his artistic productions, together with his copy of Botticelli's "Zipporah"—adorn the walls as well. Cases of shells in infinite variety, of great rarity and equal beauty, and a few minerals of various formation reveal that other side of Ruskin's taste and knowledge which those forget who thought and talked of him only as an art-critic. On the mantelpiece are superb examples of cloisonné enamel, whose rich blue rivals the colour of the finest products of Nankin. And all around are books and ornaments which the connoisseur must seek out and appreciate for himself, for they are not displayed or thrust forward as is commonly the case in treasure-houses such as this. And they serve, perhaps, to emphasize the fact —so remarkable and striking at first—that the furniture throughout the house has no flavour

—no taint, I should say—of "high art." No particular attempt is made at artistic beauty: no spindle-legs make proclamation of "culture," nor Morris-paper of "æsthetics." The furniture, for the most part, belonged to Mr. Ruskin *père;* and, sound and solid as the day it was made, seeming to bear its date of "1817" carved on its face as the year of its creation.

Beside the drawing-room—and, like it, overlooking the lake—is the study, where so many happy working hours of the Professor were passed. Here, about him, were many of his most loved possessions. Beside the doorway stands his great terrestrial globe; above it, and flanking the door on either hand, several fine Turner water-colours. On the right, at the end of the room, is the fireplace, and above it a Madonna and Child, one of the most exquisite examples of the faïence of Lucca della Robbia, "fashioned by the Master's own hand, and absolutely perfect," as Ruskin said the first time I saw it. Here, beside the hearth and next to the window, was the Professor's favourite corner. Here he would sit in his old-fashioned, high-backed chair, with a small table before him, on which he would have a couple of books or so, or his writing materials, and always glasses of flowers; and from them he would ever and again raise his eyes and gaze wistfully or in ad-

RUSKIN'S STUDY AT BRANTWOOD.

DRAWN BY ARTHUR SEVERN, R I.

miration over the lake or at the varying skies, which, as he once said, "I keep bottled like my father's sherries." Bookcases abound, and presses and cabinets. In the first low press stretching across the room is that wonderful collection of Turner drawings too precious to be allowed to hang upon the walls. Framed and hermetically sealed, they are slid upright into grooves as plates are slid into the rack by the scullery-maid. Further on is the writing-desk proper, and behind it that wonderful huge press that holds half the lions of Brantwood. Below are the mineral-cabinets. One series of drawers contains nothing but opals. Pulling out one in which lumps of stone, veined or plastered with large masses of dark-blue opal, "There!" said the Professor, "never before, I verily believe, have such gigantic pieces of opal been seen—certainly not pieces that possess that lovely colour. I'm very strong in stones," he went on, "and this collection of agates is the finest in the kingdom." In another series are the crystals, and in yet another rich specimens of gold in every condition in which it has been found; and so forth and so forth throughout the whole extent of the great nest of drawers.

Above is a collection, almost unmatched, of splendid books and manuscripts of all periods,

of special interest on their own account, and sometimes on that of previous possessors. The engrossed MSS. of the tenth, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries are of exceptional beauty. "I know of no stronger proof of the healthy condition of the Church at that time," said Ruskin, as he showed me the books with pride, fingering them with loving familiarity, yet sometimes, I thought, with a sort of easy indifference, "than the evidence of these books, when they used to write their psalm-books so beautifully and play with their initial letters so freely and artistically. Of course, the faces in all such manuscripts are very badly drawn, because the illuminators were sculptors rather than artists, in our sense of the word."

Transcending in interest all the more modern volumes are the original Scott manuscripts of several of the Waverley Novels—of "The Fortunes of Nigel," "The Black Dwarf," "Woodstock," "St. Ronan's Well," and "Peveril of the Peak." "I think," he said, taking down one of these well-cared-for volumes, "that the most precious of all is this. It is 'Woodstock.' Scott was writing this book when the news of his ruin came upon him. He was about here, where I have opened it. Do you see the beautiful handwriting? Now look, as I turn over the pages towards the end.

Is the writing one jot less beautiful? Are there more erasures than before? That assuredly shows how a man can, and should, bear adversity." For these MSS., as for the quintessence of Scott himself, Ruskin had the profoundest reverence and love, and he was ever on the watch to increase his collection. One occasion that did arise became a very sore recollection to him, for leaving an unrestricted, but presumably discretionary, limit with his friend and bookseller, Mr. F. S. Ellis, he was doomed to disappointment as an ultra-fancy price was reached. "I've been speechless with indignation," he wrote to him, "since you let go that 'Guy Mannering' MS." And again, later on: "What on earth do you go missing chance after chance like that for? I'd rather have lost a catch at cricket than that 'St. Ronan's.' . . . Seriously, my dear Ellis, I do want you to secure every Scott manuscript that comes into the market. *Carte blanche* as to price—I can trust your honour; and you may trust, believe me, *my* solvency." But the "St. Ronan's" was not lost for good, for in due time it became one of the five Scott MSS. in the famous study at Brantwood.

The first floor is reached by a stairway parallel with the dining-room passage. Its walls are hung—as are most of the rooms and cor-

ridors—with pictures and drawings of great interest: a noble canvas, unfinished, by Tintoret, and drawings by Prout, Ruskin (one in particular very Proutish), and others. Above the study is the guest-room, known as the "turret-room," with its Turners and its Prouts, and especially delightful for the look-out it affords round three points of the compass by day, and by night for the splendid view of the starlit sky. At the other end of the corridor is the room, situated over the drawing-room, of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, and between the two the bedroom occupied by the Professor. So small, so unassuming, one would say it was the least important in the house. In front of its single window, which lights it well, stands the low table; on the left wall a bookcase with its precious volumes and missals—one of which, I believe, belonged to Sir Thomas More—and on the right the wash-hand-stand, the fireplace, and the little wooden bedstead. The last-named, with the doorway, occupies nearly the whole wall facing the window; and the little room, as a whole, with its plain furniture and plainer chintz, seems rather the retreat of an anchorite than the *sanctum sanctorum* of the man whose taste was unsurpassed in England, and whose love of beauty and daintiness was keen and insatiable. But it is in the wonderful

RUSKIN'S BEDROOM, BRANTWOOD.

(SHOWING THE TURNER DRAWINGS AND THE WILLIAM HUNT ABOVE THE FIREPLACE.)

DRAWN BY ARTHUR SEVERN, R.I.

Turners which paper the room that its glory lies—drawings, every one a masterpiece, that so glow in their white mounts and frames of gold with all the colour and fancy and exquisiteness of touch and the magic of distance, that they have long been famous in the land.

"Look around at them," said Ruskin, without a shadow of the enthusiasm of the collector, but with the quiet confidence of the connoisseur, when he took me up for the first time to his bedroom to act the showman to his treasures. "There are twenty of Turner's most highly-finished water-colours, representing his whole career, from this one, when he was quite a boy, to that one, which he executed for me. There is not one of them which is not perfect in every respect. Now here is what is probably the most beautiful painting that William Hunt ever did, and it hangs among the Turners like a brooch—with that drawing of my father's above it. I hold this to be the finest collection of perfect Turner drawings in existence, with perhaps a single exception."

At right angles to the principal corridor runs another which leads to the newer portions of the house—to the rooms of the younger members of the family, to the schoolroom of the little ones, with its window built out for the view's sake, to Mr. Arthur Severn's large

studio and the greater play-room. Thence access most easily had to that lodge which Ruskin built in the grounds, "nearly as big as the house for a married servant," and which later contained Miss Severn's own little temple of ease. And about the whole place there is that air of prosperity and comfort and taste, though not of luxury nor display, which might be expected in such a home—an air of peace, happiness, and bright contentment, of artistic and intellectual activity.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE."

To Ruskin's love of feminine society, and his profound respect and admiration for the sex, justice has already been done. But although he knew well many of the most distinguished and accomplished women of the day, it was in his own home that Ruskin found the truest sympathy, the warmest affection, and, perhaps, the most efficient aid—in the person of his cousin and adopted daughter, Mrs. Arthur Severn. It was in 1864, a month after old Mr. Ruskin died, that that lady first shed her gentle light upon his household, and soon became, what she ever continued to be, his Angel in the House. How his mother yearned for companionship after her husband's death, and how she "providentially" secured the affection and the society of her little kinswoman—Joan Agnew—Ruskin has himself told with equal simplicity and grace in that last chapter of "Præterita" gratefully devoted to "Joanna's Care." "I had a notion she would be 'nice,' and saw at once that she

was entirely nice, both in my mother's way and mine; being seventeen years old. And I very thankfully took her hand out of her uncle's and received her in trust, saying—I do not remember just what. . ." And later he continues: "Nor virtually have she and I ever parted since. I do not care to count how long it is since her marriage to Arthur Severn, only I think her a great deal prettier now than I did then; but other people thought her extremely pretty then, and I am certain that everybody *felt* the guileless and melodious sweetness of the face." And he goes on to describe how, "almost on our threshold," her first conquest was made, for Carlyle rode up the front garden and stayed the whole afternoon, and dined; and, later on, paid "some very pretty compliments" to the account of Miss Joan Ruskin Agnew.

No memoir of Ruskin, however brief, can omit mention of the influence for good that Mrs. Severn exercised upon Ruskin's life. She had gone to stay with Mrs. Ruskin at Denmark Hill for seven days, while Ruskin went to Bradford—and stayed for seven years. And when her kinswoman died it was with one hand in hers, while the son held the other. Not only did she bring lightness into the house, and filled the character of Dame Durden as

delightfully and as satisfactorily as ever Miss Esther Summerson did for Mr. Jarndyce, but she helped the Professor in his mineralogical studies and arrangements. She led him—as he himself has admitted—to a fuller understanding of his beloved Scott and of Scottish genius; and she widened his knowledge and appreciation of music.

It was with great glee, and with full sense of paternal responsibility, that just two years after her arrival under his mother's roof Ruskin undertook to pilot Lady Trevelyan, her niece —Miss Constance Hilliard—and his own charge —Miss Agnew—for a voyage through Italy. "Constance Hilliard," wrote Ruskin—she became Mrs. W. H. Churchill later—"nine years old when I first saw her there, glittered about the place in an extremely quaint and witty way, and took to me a little, like her aunt. Afterwards her mother and she . . . became important among my feminine friendships." And so it fell out that Ruskin undertook to travel with them to Italy; but the war between Prussia and Austria fell out, too, and the plans had to be radically altered. Concerning this journey and annotating it, are a number of Ruskin's letters to his private secretary which lie before me as I write; and from them I quote some of the most interesting passages.

The tour had been carefully mapped out. The travellers left in the last week of April, 1866, and the first letter is as follows :—

"Paris, 27th April, 1866.

"We are getting on nicely. My address will be, Poste Restante, Vevay, Canton Vaud, Suisse. Send me as little as you possibly can. Tie up the knocker—say I'm sick—I'm dead. (Flattering and love-letters, please, in any attainable quantity. Nothing else.) Necessary business in your own words, if possible, shortly, as you would if I was really paralytic, or broken-ribbed, or anything else dreadful. And after all explanation and abbreviation don't expect any answer till I come back. But, in fact, I've a fair appetite for *one* dinner a day; my cousin likes *two*, but I only carve at one of them. Tell Ned this. The Continent is quite ghastly in unspeakable degradations and ill-omenedness of ignoble vice everywhere."

Then Lady Trevelyan, the ill-fated companion of their journey, fell ill and detained them, first in Paris and again in Neufchatel, whence, on the 13th of May, there came:

"I am entirely occupied to-day by the too probably mortal illness of one of the friends I am travelling with, but I may be yet more painfully so to-morrow. Please post enclosed, and say to everybody whom it may concern that that portrait of Mr. Mawkes is unquestionably Turner by himself, and, on the whole, the most interesting one I know. I gave Mr. Mawkes a letter to this effect six months ago, or more."

Four days later Ruskin wrote the news of Lady Trevelyan's death, which, together with

MRS. ARTHUR (JOAN RUSKIN) SEVERN.

FROM THE PORTRAIT IN COLOURED CHALK BY JOSEPH SEVERN.

the war in Italy, would probably alter all his plans. Then a move was made to Thun; and from the lake-side Ruskin wrote the following characteristic note:—

"Thun, 21st May.

"I've had a rather bad time of it at Neufchatel, what with Death and the North Wind—both Devil's inventions, as far as I can make out; but things are looking a little better now, and I have had a lovely three hours' walk by the lake shore, in cloudless calm, from five to eight this morning, under hawthorn and chestnut—here just in full blossom, and among other pleasantnesses too good for mortals, as the North Wind and the rest of it are too bad. We don't deserve either such blessing or cursing, it seems to poor moth me."

Interlaken was the next place of sojourn. On the 26th May Ruskin wrote:—

"All you've done is right, except sending Mr. Henry Vaughan about his business. He is a great Turner man. Please write to him that he would be welcome to see anything of mine, but I would rather show them to him myself. Also, don't take people to Denmark Hill, as it would make my mother nervous. I'm pretty well; my two ducklings all right."

Four days later he writes from the same place:—

"I have answered the Vice Chancellor, saying I'll come after the long vacation. If I ought to come before he must tell me by a line to Denmark Hill. . . I have had long letters to write to Lady Trevelyan's sister, and I'm much tired. Joan is well and Constance, and there's no one else in the inn just now, and the noise they make

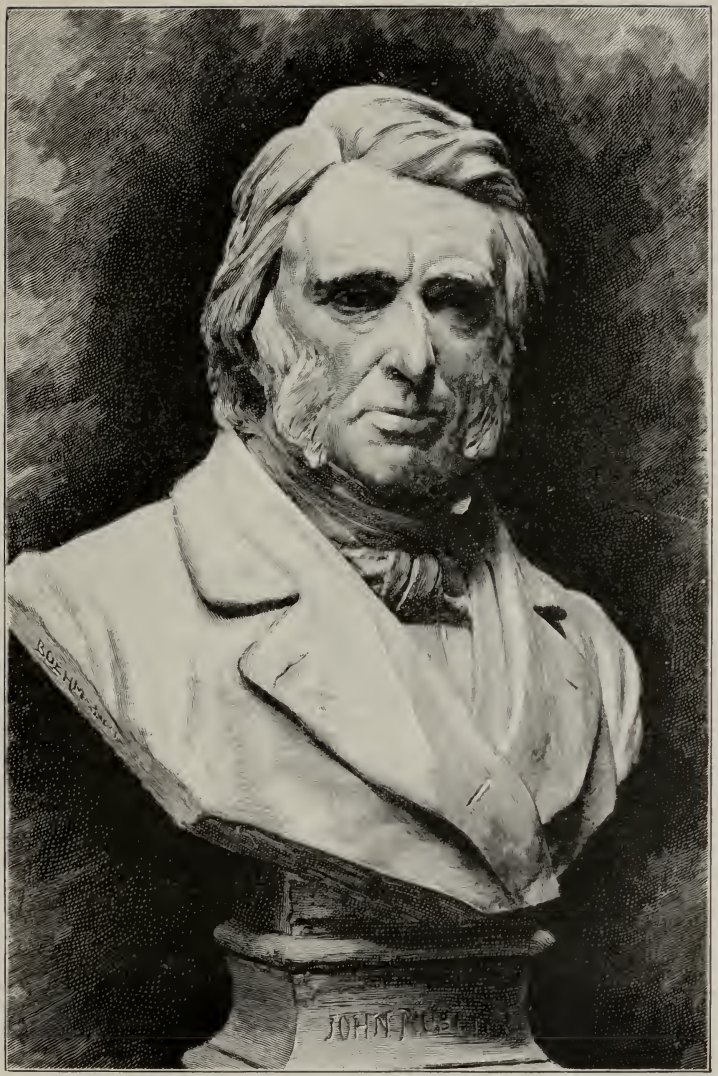
in the passages is something—I was going to say 'unheard of,' but that's not quite the expression."

Another letter from Interlaken, in which he says: "I am pretty well, much as usual; fresh air seems to do me little good, and foul little harm;" and another from Meyringen announces the arrival of the party at Lucerne, whence he writes delightedly, on Friday, 22nd June:

"That 'nice, quiet Miss Hilliard' was dancing quadrilles with an imaginary partner—(a pine branch I had brought in to teach her botany with!)—all round the breakfast table so long yesterday morning that I couldn't get my letters written, and am all behind to-day in consequence. . . I've got Georgie's letter. I'm too good-for-nothing to answer such divine things."

Business communications followed from Schaffhausen and Berne, chiefly with regard to a certain wandering letter which was "starting in pursuit of me to Interlaken and thenceforward. It will catch me at Vevay at last, I believe, after making its own Swiss tour." And the writer continues: "I am sadly tired—disgusted with the war and all things. I have been very anxious about the two children since I was left alone with them, but it would have disappointed them too cruelly to bring them home at once."

The 4th of July found Ruskin and "his ducklings" at Geneva, whence he wrote:—



JOHN RUSKIN, 1880.

FROM THE BUST BY SIR EDGAR BOEHM, BART., R.A.

(*See p. 190.*)

"My little daisy—Miss Hilliard—is wild to-day about jewellers' shops, but not so wild as to have no love to send you. So here you have it, and some from the other one, too, though she's rather worse than the little one, because of a new bracelet. They've been behaving pretty well lately, and only broke a chair nearly in two this morning running after each other."

Returning by way of Interlaken, Mr. Ruskin and his wards came back to Denmark Hill, after an absence of about three months, while the great war was proceeding and preventing them from reaching Italy; but the time, as may be seen in "Præterita," was occupied by a journey of such delight that Mrs. Severn has declared that it was one of the most pleasurable memories of her youthful days.

It was in 1870 that Miss Agnew was married to Mr. Arthur Severn, the eminent water-colour painter, and became the "Joan Ruskin Severn" whose name is so closely linked with that of the Professor as his most trusted friend and counsellor, and the cheerful companion and guardian of his age. He always rejoiced in her company, and when he chanced to be absent for a brief time he would send her daily letters of cheery import; and the delight with which he watched her family grow up around him (for he would not spare her even when she was married—*especially* when she was married) equalled the pleasure he found in the friend-

ship of her husband. But to the last, I think, he was always a little regretful that, although she had married the husband whom he welcomed cordially as the companion best fitted for "his darling," he could not overbear the individuality of the artist to the point of making him in all respects a true disciple of the Ruskinian theory of painting.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOME-LIFE AT CONISTON.

But for the occasional access of illness in his later years, and the periodical intrusion of worrying attacks or harassing troubles—as the sound of battle murmurs from afar, though sometimes, too, of persecution nearer home—the life of Ruskin in his retreat at Coniston was one of sweet peace and luxurious quiet. He lived, in a measure, by rote, ordering his life carefully—both the time for work and the time for leisure.

Never, indeed, was man more methodical in his work than Ruskin, nor more precise and regular in obedience to the rules he laid down for his guidance. From first to last his working hours were from seven in the morning till noon, and for no consideration would he exceed his limit. Within those five daily hours all his work was produced—not only his books, but his business and private correspondence. Work in the afternoon was by himself forbidden, unless it took the form of reading, and never under any circumstances, save in the extremely exceptional case of an important note,

would he write letters in the evening. On one occasion, at a time when he was busily engaged upon one of his books, he wrote to a gentleman who afterwards became his confidential secretary for a time:

"I am ashamed of myself when I look at the date of your letter, but it arrived when I was far from well and in a press of work, and as I had only to answer with sincere thanks—and I find my gratitude will always *keep*—I put off replying till I am ashamed to reply."

And nine years later, in May, 1865, writing to the same person, who was now about to enter on his secretarial duties and occupy the position of friendship he afterwards forfeited, he wrote:—

"I could not even read your letter last night. I was at dinner, and I never answer or read letters after 'business hours'—I never see anybody—my best friends—but by pre-engagement. Ask the Rossetti's or anyone else who knows me. I can't do it, having my poor, little, weak head and body divided enough by my day's work. But do not the less think me—ever faithfully yours."

Those only who saw Ruskin at home can claim properly to have *known* him. There within his own *atrium* was little sign of the dogmatism that characterised his appearance in the lecture-room, or the shyness that so often attended him in the drawing-room of society and touched his deportment with a sus-

picion of *gaucherie*. Writing of him in 1855, James Smetham said: "I wish I could reproduce a good impression of John for you, to give you the notion of his 'perfect gentleness and lowliness.' . . He is different at home from that which he is in a lecture before a mixed audience, and there is a spiritual sweetness in the half-timid expression of his eyes." As he was in 1855 so he was in 1893: keen in respect to every subject which he discussed, modest in respect to those in which he thought his interlocutor the better versed, and uncompromisingly emphatic when well upon his own ground. "Old Mrs. Ruskin," said Smetham, "puts 'John' down, and holds her own opinions, and flatly contradicts him; and he receives all her opinions with a soft reverence and gentleness that is pleasant to witness." And so he remained to the end—opinionated, undoubtedly, as he had a right to be, but gentle and considerate with his friends, as he had before been filially reverential to his mother.

With his life at Denmark Hill, Ruskin made the world sufficiently acquainted in his writings. At Brantwood his life was necessarily of a more tranquil order, and, perhaps, more in accordance with the habits of a country squire. In weather that was "too fine and lovely to

think of rascals in," as he wrote to me once *apropos* of certain artistic troubles that were brewing in London, he would climb the hills or walk along the lake-side, wander over the moor or cut away the underwood; or he would romp with Mrs. Severn's youngest children, or "play cricket" (more properly battledore and shuttlecock) with the elder ones. For "cricket," indeed, "Di Pa" (as he was fondly love-named) was in great request; but, in truth, he was no great hand at the sport, and his protest to Mr. Ellis that he would rather have missed a catch at cricket than that Scott manuscript must be taken rather as a bit of humorous self-criticism than as serious judgment of his powers at the game. He was a tireless walker, and almost to the last he would ramble for hours during the day, attended by his valet, Baxter, or leaning on Mrs. Severn's arm, when the weather permitted, and the keen air threatened him with neither neuralgia nor chilblains.

Until the latter years of his life he loved to read Scott in the evening, and the family was expected to sit round and listen while he rendered one or other of the Waverley Novels with that completeness of realisation that few could equal. He would modify his voice for the various characters, and would

revel in the Scottish accent, which he gave to perfection. As age began to tell upon him he would sometimes drop asleep for a moment or two in the middle of a chapter; but on awaking with a guilty start he would nevertheless continue the appointed reading just as if nothing had happened.

On the occasion of the visit to which I have before referred, the Scott-reading days were over. Ruskin no longer took his meals with the family, but alone in his study; partly because, in accordance with the doctor's mandate, he ate very slowly, and partly because he found that the lively interest he took in the conversation had a deleterious effect upon his digestive processes. He would take an early breakfast in bed, comfortably propped by pillows and warmly wrapped in his dressing-gown, down the front of which his grey beard flowed with patriarchal dignity. He would then dress and descend to the study, when, after another breakfast, he would go out until a half-hour before luncheon time. Then, after resting for a time, he would sally forth again; and, on returning, he would sit and think, or read. In the course of reading he would often annotate a book; and I remember the amusement with which it was remarked that an author's declaration of what he could "plainly see" had called forth a marginal

note of "you owl!" After dinner the Professor —or "Coz," as he was usually spoken of by Mrs. Severn in her own house—would come into the drawing-room and ensconce himself in his chair, with that "back-cuddling" posture that was peculiar to him. Then, as he sipped at his cup of coffee, and afterwards at his glass of port, the chess-table was brought out, and the Professor and Mr. Arthur Severn, or the visitor, would settle down to a game. For, as it has been said, Ruskin passionately loved a game of chess. He had been a master of it, and played with great rapidity and considerable brilliancy. At one time he was a constant visitor to the Maskelyne and Cooke entertainment, where on at least one occasion he took a hand in the rubber with "Psycho;" and whenever a new chess-playing automaton made a public appearance he would endeavour to try conclusions with it. Indeed, it was a matter of pride to him that he had obtained more than one victory over the famous player, "Mephisto," at the time when it was performing at the Crystal Palace with considerable *éclat*.

Towards the end of his life he would rather listen than talk, and was readier to be amused than to amuse. Nevertheless he entered keenly into the subject of conversation, and his blue eyes flashed intelligence even when he preferred

to maintain silence. Yet he would talk, and talk well, if the humour took him. Thus, on the last evening of my latest visit he was, I remember well, more than usually conversational, and in his brightest humour. The subject of birds was mooted, and then he fell a-thinking. "Ah!" he said, with his quaint-sounding r-less articulation, "I have made a great mistake. I have wasted my life with mineralogy, which has led to nothing. Had I devoted myself to birds, their life and plumage, I might have produced something worth doing. If I could only have seen a humming-bird fly," he went on with a wistful smile, "it would have been an epoch in my life! Just think what a happy life Mr. Gould's must have been—what a happy life! Think what he saw and what he painted. I once painted with the utmost joy a complete drawing of a pheasant—complete with all its patterns, and the markings of every feather, in all its particulars and details accurate. It seems to me an entirely wonderful thing that the Greeks, after creating such a play as 'The Birds,' never went further in the production of any scientific result. You remember that perfectly beautiful picture of Millais'—'The Ornithologist'—the old man with his birds around him?—one of the most pathetic pictures of modern times." And thus he talked on during the evening, on one

or other of his favourite subjects, until, at half-past ten, Mrs. Severn rose without a word and gently took his arm to escort him to his bedroom door. He submitted with a loving smile; he gently pressed his visitor's hand in both of his, and saying jocularly, "Good night, old 'un," to Mr. Arthur Severn, and merrily, "Good night, piggy-wiggy," to one of the young ladies, the old man moved with genial dignity to the door and through it made a slow and stately exit.

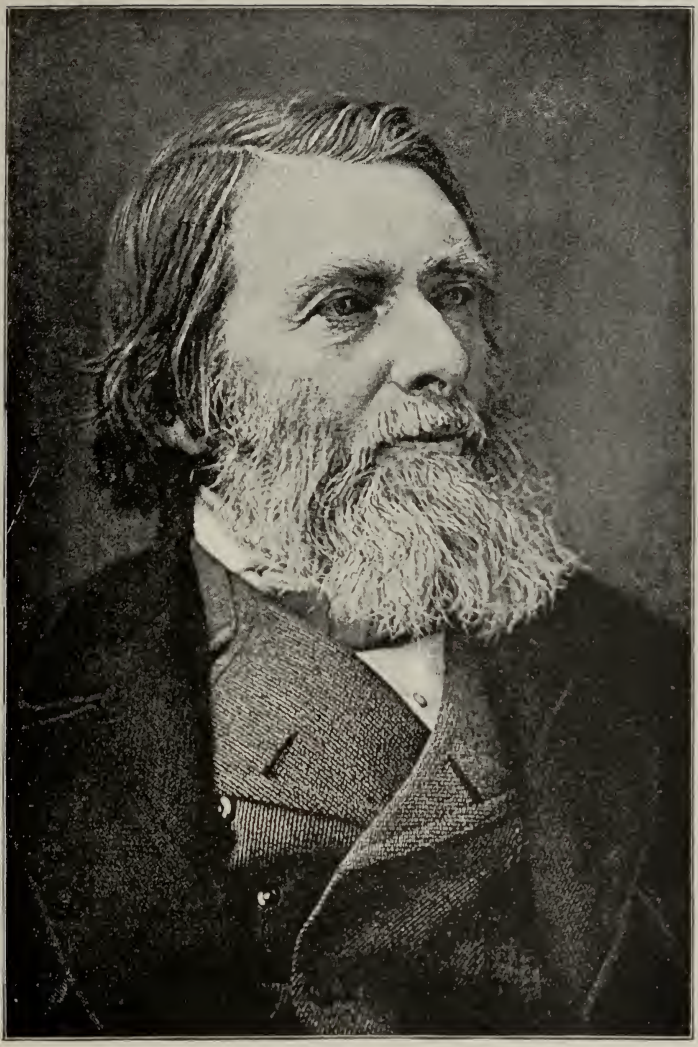
CHAPTER XIV.

THE PORTRAITS OF RUSKIN.

It is not a little interesting to see what manner of man was he who had but to put his pen to paper to set the whole art-world by the ears; he kindled our admiration for his literary excellences even while amusing us by his originality and his quaintness, startling us with the bitterness of his scorn, with the heat of his eloquence, and the gall of his contempt and ridicule, tickling us with the delicacy of his banter, or sometimes even with the error of his *parti pris*, and charming us with the wealth, beauty, and poetry of his diction. How did his appearance, external and physical, impress him who had formed his own conception of the author seen through his own writings? Truth to tell, the first sight was a little disappointing. It has often been said that with Lord John Russell, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and many more, he shared the distinction of being one of the great little men of his day; but this is certainly not founded upon fact. Mrs. Arthur Severn's testimony on this point is conclusive. "I grant,

alas!" she wrote early in 1891, "that in the last ten years he has stooped so much that he has shrunk into what might be considered by some people a little man; but about twenty-five years ago I should certainly have called him much above the average height. And as a young man he was well over five feet ten inches—indeed, almost five feet eleven; and people who knew him then would have called him tall!" This evidence, incontrovertible by itself, is yet confirmed by Dr. Furnivall's preface to Mr. Maurice's little book. "Ruskin," he says, "was a tall slight fellow, whose piercing and frank blue eye lookt through you and drew you to him." Thus, though the slightness of his build reduced the weight of his figure to little more than ten stone of humanity, such was the brilliancy of the conversationalist that nothing remained but a commanding magnetic personality, the sweetness of whose merry, fascinating smile, and the vivacious, deeply sympathetic expression of whose bright blue eyes removed at once all sense of size or comparative diminutiveness.

It is, perhaps, to be deplored that the head and features of "the Professor" were not more often recorded than is the case. Mr. G. F. Watts, who has painted a prodigious number of the most eminent men of the day, never sought to execute a portrait of Ruskin—"it



JOHN RUSKIN, 1882.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BARRAUD.

(*See p. 169.*)

would have been impossible for me to attempt it," said he, for "I should have felt paralysed in Ruskin's presence." Several artists of distinction have set those features on canvas, moulded them in clay, and carved them in marble; but it is rather through the photographer that they will live, with all the thousand and one changes of expression and humour that no painter or sculptor could hope to seize so as to give a complete representation of the man.* Moreover, Ruskin had no special love for being reproduced: paradoxical as it may sound, his lack of vanity in respect to his own features

* As late as 1887 Mr. Ruskin wrote to me that "no photograph gives any of the good in me," and he was himself more pleased with the accurate truth than with the obliging amiability of the camera. When the Queen asked Chalon, the miniaturist, if his beautiful art would not be killed by photography, then newly-invented, the Academician replied, with a complacent bow: "Madame, photography cannot flattère." This, in a measure, Ruskin felt too, and, I think, a little resented. But he was entirely pleased with Mr. Barraud's portraits of himself, which he declared were "the first done of him that expressed what good or character there was in him for his work." The plate of himself standing by a tree-trunk was taken when he was in one of his more frivolous moods. Young ladies and professional beauties, he said, were taken beneath palm-branches, or leaning gracefully against a tree, and for that playful reason he selected the pose—very awkward for a man of such natural grace of movement as he was—shown in the photograph reproduced on page 195.

struck me once, when we were talking on this subject, as savouring not a little, but not unpleasantly, of that very weakness. Yet, on the other hand, he certainly entertained no strong objection to sit for his portrait—an objection which in some men amounts to an absolute superstition. Isaac D'Israeli keenly observes in his "Curiosities of Literature": "Marville justly reprehends the fastidious feelings of those ingenious men who have resisted the solicitations of the artist to sit for their portraits. In them it is sometimes as much pride, as it is vanity in those who are less difficult in this respect. Of Gray, Fielding, and Akenside we have no heads for which they sat; a circumstance regretted by their admirers and by physiognomists." But here, by the way, D'Israeli was wrong, for Akenside did sit for his portrait to Pond in 1754, and it was engraved in mezzotint by Fisher in 1772.

Certainly, Ruskin's father had no such prejudices and scruples, and when his son was not more than three and a half years old he employed James Northcote, R.A., to paint a portrait of the child. This charming picture, the size of life, is well known by reputation to readers of "Fors Clavigera" and of the opening chapter of "Præterita." Let Mr. Ruskin himself speak:

"The portrait in question represents a

very pretty child with yellow hair, dressed in a white frock like a girl, with a broad light-blue sash and blue shoes to match; the feet of the child wholesomely large in proportion to its body, and the shoes still more wholesomely large in proportion to the feet. These articles of my daily dress were all sent to the old painter for perfect realisation; but they appear in the picture more remarkable than they were in my nursery, because I am represented as running in a field at the edge of a wood, with the trunks of its trees stripped across in the manner of Sir Joshua Reynolds; while two rounded hills, as blue as my shoes, appear in the distance, which were put in by the painter at my own request, for I had already been once, if not twice, taken to Scotland, and my Scottish nurse having always sung to me as we approached the Tweed or Esk—

> 'For Scotland, my darling, lies full in thy view,
> With her barefooted lasses, and mountains so blue,'

the idea of distant hills was connected in my mind with approach to the extreme felicities of life, in my Scottish aunt's garden of gooseberry bushes, sloping to the Tay. But that, when old Mr. Northcote asked me (little thinking, I fancy, to get any answer so ex-

plicit) what I would like to have in the distance of my picture, I should have said 'blue hills' instead of 'gooseberry bushes,' appears to me—and I think without morbid tendency to think overmuch of myself—a fact sufficiently curious, and not without promise in a child of that age."

Of this picture there are two versions, the first the life-size portrait hanging in Brantwood; and the other an admirable reduced copy of it, at Mr. Arthur Severn's house at Herne Hill—the place which belonged at one time to the Professor's father, and which his own writings have endeared to all Ruskindom. How far this portrait is an accurate likeness it is impossible to say, but there is a manifest similarity between it and the prettily-conceived allegorical subject by the same artist which represents the child naked, with a faun or satyr—or, as Mr. Ruskin himself calls him, "a wild man of the woods"—extracting a thorn from the foot of the baby-shepherd. There is no missing the resemblance between the running child and the poor half-averted, panic-stricken, little face. This picture, Mr. Ruskin tells us, was painted at the special request of old Northcote, who had previously been so greatly charmed with the quaint repose and excellent sitting of the little model.

Assuming that the first-named portrait gives a fair impression of the child, we see young John Ruskin the possessor of a fine intellectual head, quite exceptional in one so young, with singularly beautiful blue eyes, and a mouth of great sensibility. Playing happily in the green fields "among the lambs and the daisies," he reveals the same love of nature which has always been his strongest passion from first to last. We may safely take it that the likeness is a good one, for the artist was one of the best portrait-painters of his day; and although he greatly affected history-painting, sacred as well as profane, portraiture was his speciality. By this time, however, Northcote was a man greatly advanced in years, of whom Charles Westmacott, in his "Pindaric Ode," issued in 1824, had written—

> "Northcote, the veteran, let me praise.
> For works of past and brighter days."

His star was manifestly in the descendent, and only one of his works was afterwards publicly shown in Somerset House, where the Royal Academy then held its court. Yet Ruskin always thought well of the painter, although he has written so little about him in his works. Showing me the artist's portrait of Mr. Ruskin, senior, which hangs in the

dining-room at Brantwood, and which at once recalls something of Reynolds's "Banished Lord" to the memory of the beholder, the Professor expressed his gratification that his father "had the good taste and the good sense to have his portrait painted by so clever an artist." Neither of these portraits by Northcote was ever exhibited in the Royal Academy.

We now come to the year 1842, when Mr. George Richmond, R.A., painted the full-length water-colour for Mr. Ruskin's father. At that time the young graduate was not yet famous. He had distinguished himself at Oxford; he had proved himself a born artist, by the charming drawings he had produced under the tutorship of Copley Fielding and J. D. Harding; he had shown himself something of a poet—a "minor" one, at least—by the verses, instinct with feeling and imagination, which he had contributed to a magazine; a scientist, by the manner in which he treated subjects, geological, mineralogical, meteorological, and other, as already recorded, in the pages of Loudon's *Magazine of Natural History* and other learned periodicals; and an inventor, by his "cyanometer"—an instrument for measuring the depth of blue in the sky. He had fairly tested his keen critical faculty, as

the author of the series of papers on the "Poetry of Architecture," and a work destined to be much enlarged in defence of Turner, who was fast becoming the butt of the ignorant critics. But his great work—the book that was to bring him such immortality as he may enjoy—was as yet unpublished. The first volume of "Modern Painters," or, as he was within an ace of calling it, "Turner and the Ancients," was, indeed, not unwritten; but it was not issued until the following year. And when the portrait was hung in the Royal Academy and catalogued "1061, John Raskin, Esq.," there was none so wise as to correct it.

For that portrait, which is reproduced through the kindness of Mr. Arthur Severn and of the artist, Mr. Richmond had plenty of opportunity for studying his sitter. His senior by ten years, Mr. Richmond was of the Ruskin family party which, with Mr. Joseph (otherwise "Keats's") Severn, journeyed through France and Italy for the purpose of studying nature and æsthetics in the artistic Elysium of Europe. He shared his enthusiasm for art and encouraged his aspirations; and he was his companion on other expeditions, for which reason this first portrait of Ruskin as a man—he was now in his twenty-fourth year—has a peculiar interest. It is manifestly like him; and his at-

titude as he turns from his desk, at which, may be, he had just been polishing his rounded periods in the proof-sheets of "Modern Painters," and was about to make some new drawing of the distant Alps, is thoroughly characteristic of the man. The mountain landscape background, too, of which Mont Blanc is the principal feature, is what we might expect from the boy who asked for "boo hills." But the spectator cannot but be struck with surprise at his quite unusual tallness. This is a physical fact which we can hardly accept, tall though Ruskin undoubtedly was in his youth; yet it may be that the natural slightness of the young author and a certain smallness of the furniture lent him a height which is misleading only through lack of proper comparison of proportion. As a work of art the portrait is in every way charming and interesting, and an admirable example of the water-colour portraits with which Mr. Richmond—"dear George Richmond," as Ruskin calls him—was then building up his reputation.

It shows us the Ruskin militant of those days—not yet steeped in the bitterness of controversy, but ready for the fray—good-humoured, sensitive, shrewd, and keen, turning his gentle and kindly face towards the friend who is painting him. To judge by the shape of his head

and face, he already belongs to what phrenologists and physiognomists would call the "eagle tribe"—the aquiline nose, as they would tell us, denoting sovereignty over men; the projecting brows, perceptiveness with undoubted æsthetic tendencies; and the chin, a considerable degree of reasoning power to direct his strongly-conceived opinions, yet with hardly a corresponding capacity for continuous logical deduction. Thus has his face been read by an accredited student of physiognomy. Yet with this version would the subject of it certainly have disagreed; for Ruskin especially prided himself upon his power of logical deduction and analysis, and somewhere quotes Mazzini on him to the same effect.

On these characteristics of face Sir John Everett Millais dwelt somewhat over-much in a chalk or pencil-drawing executed about this time, if we are to judge by the impression it made on those who saw it. Referring to this drawing, the late Mr. Woolner, R.A., wrote to me as follows:—"The Millais pencil-sketch was in the possession of Lady Trevelyan, wife of the late Sir Walter Trevelyan, of Wallington. The likeness, so far as I can remember, was very good, but the expression that of a hyena, or something between Carker and that hilarious animal. Enemies would call the expression

characteristic, but friends would declare that it did him injustice." Whether this portrait is the same as that by Sir John, now belonging to Mr. Severn, I cannot say.

In 1853 Sir John Millais began his brilliant portrait of the now celebrated art-critic. Ruskin was known as the author of "Modern Painters," he had published his "Seven Lamps of Architecture," the "Stones of Venice," and other things, and had assumed the position of the champion of the cause of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—a champion *plus royaliste que le roi*, more Pre-Raphaelite than the Pre-Raphaelites, and with more impetuous enthusiasm in his own nervous brain and frame than in those of the whole other seven put together. This movement had for the last five years profoundly exercised the minds of the art-world, and no pen but Ruskin's could have fought its battle so fiercely, so powerfully, and so eloquently, nor with so great a measure of success. In acknowledgment of the yeoman's service he had rendered and was still rendering, Millais painted this portrait, which its possessor, Sir Henry Acland, of Oxford, has so courteously allowed me to reproduce. Both painter and sitter were in Scotland, whither the young author had gone to deliver his "Lectures on Architecture and Painting," and there, standing

by the waterfall of Glenfinlas, Millais painted him, religiously abiding in the execution of the picture by all the tenets of the Pre-Raphaelite faith. Ruskin says somewhere that the Englishman is content to have his portrait painted any way but praying, which was the chosen delight of the Venetian noble; and similarly here, though not on his knees, but wrapped in loving reverence of nature, full of that spirit of humility and reverential awe which all men feel at times, is the young preacher represented, as he stands bare-headed by the little cataract that rushes and dances down the "grey-white valley" to join the waters of Loch Lomond. With rare conscientiousness has Millais rendered every detail in the scene. The geologist can detect no flaw in the painting of the rocks, nor can the botanist find aught to carp at in the representation of lichen, plant, or flower, Detail was never more truthfully and accurately set on canvas than here in this small frame, measuring in all but eight-and-twenty inches by twenty-four, while in respect to technique the painter has rarely excelled the perfect execution of this work, which he completed in 1854, the year after his election into the Academy.

Nor is the character of the figure at all unworthy of the still-life in this remarkable

picture. The man is seen at a moment when his enthusiasm is lost in contemplation. The hair, always luxuriant, even to the last, is thrown back in somewhat heavy masses from his temples, and reveals once more, and, perhaps, more successfully than heretofore, the stamp of man he was. Drawn between profile and three-quarter face, the upper part of the head is perfectly rendered; but the aquilinity of the nose is not sufficiently emphasized, nor is the full sensibility of the mouth made quite as much of as it deserves—and his mouth was one of his most remarkable features. In this connection a further extract from Mr. Woolner's private reminiscences of Ruskin's appearance may be appropriately quoted:—

"As to Ruskin's mouth, it would be hard for anyone to read that feature. Rossetti told me that when a boy Ruskin had part of one of his lips bitten off by a dog. The mouth is the most expressive of all features, and tells the history of its owner's nature better than any other; but under the circumstances how would it be possible to read it accurately? To fill up the gaps in Sappho's verse would be but a schoolboy's exercise compared to such a task. Lavater might give a hint, or the Greek expert who discovered that Socrates was a sensual fellow, but I don't think any modern physiog-

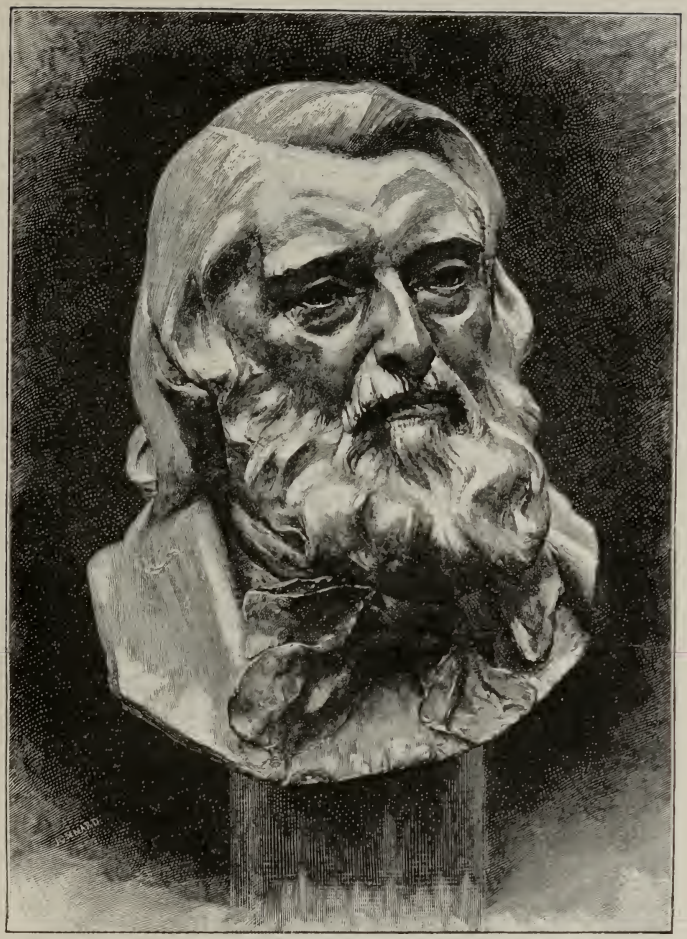
nomist could do much with this modern instance. Of course, the main force of his head is perception, this faculty being unusually developed; but, so far as I remember, I do not think there is anything else out of the common in the shape of it. His expression is varied beyond all example in my experience."

Sanguineness and sweetness of temperament, when not crossed, appear to have been his chief characteristics at that time. Writing to me about our friend, as he knew him in those early days, Mr. Holman Hunt has recorded his interesting recollections as follows :—

"When I first met him I was struck by his great slenderness of build, which was not yet without remarkable gracefulness of motion in quiet life. In manner, his persevering politeness and untiring pains to interest me and others in his possessions almost surprised me, and it would have been really unbearable to receive so much attention had he not shown so much pleasure in gratifying his guests. On further acquaintance he was quite capable of expressing the most extreme discontent that his friends would not adopt all his views. He was displeased with me for my determination to go to the East, and that I did not set myself to work to found a school. I was often amused at his ignoring the state of

paralysis I was generally in from want of means. He would ask me why I did not go to Scotland for a few weeks or months for a holiday when I appeared overworked? and more than once he urged me not to delay leaving England for the purpose of seeing Italy—when in truth my purse would have been empty at Dover, and there would have been no means of making sure of a home had I returned on foot from the coast. It was quite strange to witness how this life-long experience of finding all things that he wanted at hand had made him, not incapable of talking of poverty, but without power of realising how straitness of means prevented a man from obeying the inclinations of his mind and body at every turn. Whatever feeling he professed towards one's purposes, I can say that I never found him anything but most gentle and tenderly affectionate, and although for some years circumstances made us unable to see one another much, I never had any reason to think him other than one of the truest men I had ever met as a noble friend." It is not uninteresting to seek for the traits set forth in Mr. Holman Hunt's generous testimony in the admirable synchronous portrait by Millais.

Three years later, in 1857, Mr. Richmond



JOHN RUSKIN, 1884.

FROM THE BUST BY CONRAD DRESSLER.

(*See p. 193.*)

executed a head in chalk, also for Mr. Ruskin the elder, which is an excellent specimen of the artist's skill in this kind of portraiture. In this drawing, as in the water-colour, Mr. Richmond has preferred to show us the gentleness, thoughtfulness, and brilliance of the friend, rather than the vigour, the combativeness, and the earnestness of the crusader—characteristics which at the time were most impressed on the public mind. In both his charming works it is "Ruskin at Home" whom the artist has recorded, not Ruskin the Teacher nor Ruskin the Missionary. This portrait, which hangs at Brantwood, and which was brilliantly engraved by Francis Holl, A.R.A.—Frank Holl's father—and issued in a reduced size in one of Mr. Allen's publications, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in the year it was made. Mrs. Severn tells me the following pretty circumstance concerning this head:—"When the 1857 portrait was done by dear, courteous Mr. Richmond, some friends thought it flattered Mr. Ruskin; but Mr. Richmond said, 'No; it is only the truth, lovingly told.'"

A few years after Mr. George Richmond painted his large water-colour head of Professor Ruskin, Rossetti produced his portrait of his friend. It is a crayon drawing, not unlike those which he executed of other members of the Pre-

Raphaelite Brotherhood. It is simply executed in coloured chalks, of which the prevailing tint is red, and represents the young enthusiast in an attitude in which the artist often placed his sitters—nearly full-face and looking down. It is life-size, vignette in form, and belonged to the late Dr. Pocock, of Brighton; it is now at Oxford.

Nearly another decade elapsed before any portrait other than photographic was produced that I know of. Mr. Ruskin's water-colour portrait of himself, which is at Herne Hill, was painted in 1864, or perhaps a year later—a three-quarter view in pencil, lightly and skilfully washed in; this and another life-size head belong to Mrs. Arthur Severn. Ten years afterwards the Professor made two more autographic efforts, one in pencil and the other in water-colour—both of which he presented to his American friend and fellow-traveller, Professor C. A. Norton. In 1875, or thereabouts, a clever modeller, by name Mr. Charles Ashmore, of Aston, a suburb of Birmingham, produced a plaster medallion that is an excellent likeness of Ruskin's features; but it fails to impart any vivacity to the face or to give any of the expression of intellectuality which was never absent from it. This work, however, probably took a photograph for its basis.

The following year—that which saw his

re-election to the Slade Professorship in the University of Oxford—his features were cleverly caught by M. Georges Pilotelle, who chanced upon the Professor as he stood before Turner's "Python" in the National Gallery. The "lightning artist" made a faithful sketch of the thoughtful face, and, re-drawing it in dry-point upon copper, he introduced it into the series of portraits of notabilities which he was then producing for Mr. Noseda, by whose permission it appears on page 111 of the present volume. It is not uninteresting to compare this head with that in the Millais picture painted two-and-twenty years before, and to see how little time has worked upon the living face, and how lightly it has dealt with the flowing locks. Here he is as we of the younger generation knew him, his favourite sky-blue stiff satin tie wound round his neck and falling in a bow in the familiar, double-breasted waistcoat, and matching the deep azure of his clear and fearless eyes. There is more indecision than might be expected about the lips, but that, I take it, is rather the fault of the etcher's needle than of the Professor's mouth. It may be observed that the hair is parted on the opposite side—a merely accidental representation, owing to the direct sketch upon the copper being reversed in the printing.

To the same period, or nearly so, belong two other portraits: the first, a miniature by Mr. Andrews, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1877, and which, being based upon a previously-produced likeness, need find no place here; and the second, a water-colour drawing by Mr. Arthur Severn. This interesting little picture, painted in full-length, together with the chalk drawing by Millais, is in the hands of the painter, and I respect his wishes in reserving any description of it.

Towards the close of the same year—September, 1877—Mr. Benjamin Creswick produced his bust under circumstances of some interest. The sculptor was one of the many artists whose talent Mr. Ruskin "discovered" in his long life of beneficent watchfulness, and whose education he personally undertook, while charging himself with the cost of their worldly necessities. Mr. Creswick, in later years Lecturer to the Birmingham School of Art, sought to express his gratefulness for the generosity and interest of his patron—who, I understand, paid all expenses, not only for himself during four years, but also for his family (for he married young) and his aged parents—by modelling the bust in his tenderest mood, into which he aimed at throwing all the love and reverence he entertained for his bene-

factor. Mr. Creswick's introduction to Ruskin was through the late Mr. Swan, when the late curator of the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield was on a visit to the Professor at Brantwood. "Whilst there," writes Mr. Creswick in reference to this incident, "he induced him to give me a sitting for a bust. This was early in September, 1877. After the first sitting of an hour the Professor asked me how many more I should require. 'Five,' I replied. 'After what I have seen of your work,' said he, 'I will give you as many as you want'"—for Ruskin took a quite Pre-Raphaelite delight in watching for how long a time, and with how much patience, the sculptor would work at obtaining an expression which the briefest glance had enabled him to observe. The result is a bust which has pleased those most concerned, Ruskin declaring it, while it was still in progress, as unsurpassed in modern sculpture except by Thorwaldsen; while others regard it as being specially successful in realising one of the sitter's most beautiful expressions, and entirely characteristic of his animation when interested by sympathetic conversation. The bust, which is in the Ruskin Museum at Meersbrook Park, Sheffield, represents the Professor in the gown of his degree. There is also distinctly indicated the slight

stoop, or bend, that his friends knew so well, which afterwards became so much accentuated. For my own part, judging from the photograph which Dr. Bendelack Hewetson has kindly taken for me, I cannot help thinking that, pleasing as it is in expression, the bust is neither striking as a likeness nor, to be frank, in point of vigour likely to occupy so high a position as a work of art, as others have freely declared. Yet, as I said before, it is a favourite work with some who are considered good judges and who certainly were well acquainted with the Professor. A duplicate of the bust is in the possession of Sir Henry Acland.

The late Sir J. Edgar Boehm, R.A., modelled a bust of Ruskin for the Ruskin School in the University Galleries in 1880, and there it is now placed, carried out in marble upon a pedestal, in the centre of the large room. The portrait can hardly be considered a sympathetic one. Not that the sculptor was out of sympathy with his sitter—as the reader may judge by the words of the artist, who, writing to me a short while before his death on the subject of the work, said, "I never saw any face on which the character and the inside of the man were so clearly written. He can never have *tried* to dissimulate." How true this is will be felt by all Ruskin's acquaint-

ance. Not only could he never have tried to dissimulate, but that man must have been hardened indeed who would try to dissimulate in his magnetic presence, for so fearlessly truthful was his look that the quiet gaze from the bright blue eyes must have been strangely disarming. What appears unsatisfactory about Sir Edgar's bust is a certain hardness of expression about the mouth—an absence of those qualities which rarely failed to endear him at once to whomever entered into conversation with him. It is the scholar, the thinker, and the disputant, rather than the man, that Sir Edgar shows us.

We now come to the large life-size portrait by Professor Hubert Herkomer, R.A. In this likeness, it seems to me, the artist has sought to place upon the face of his predecessor in the Slade Chair all the kindliness which Sir Edgar Boehm omitted, all the cheery gentleness and old-world sweetness of disposition that distinguished him. The Boehm bust shows us something of a misanthrope; the Herkomer portrait places before us the philanthropist, quiet, kindly, and self-possessed. The brow is, perhaps, a little too broad, and the projection of the eyebrows hardly enough insisted upon; but the character of the nose and the quaint, expressive mouth

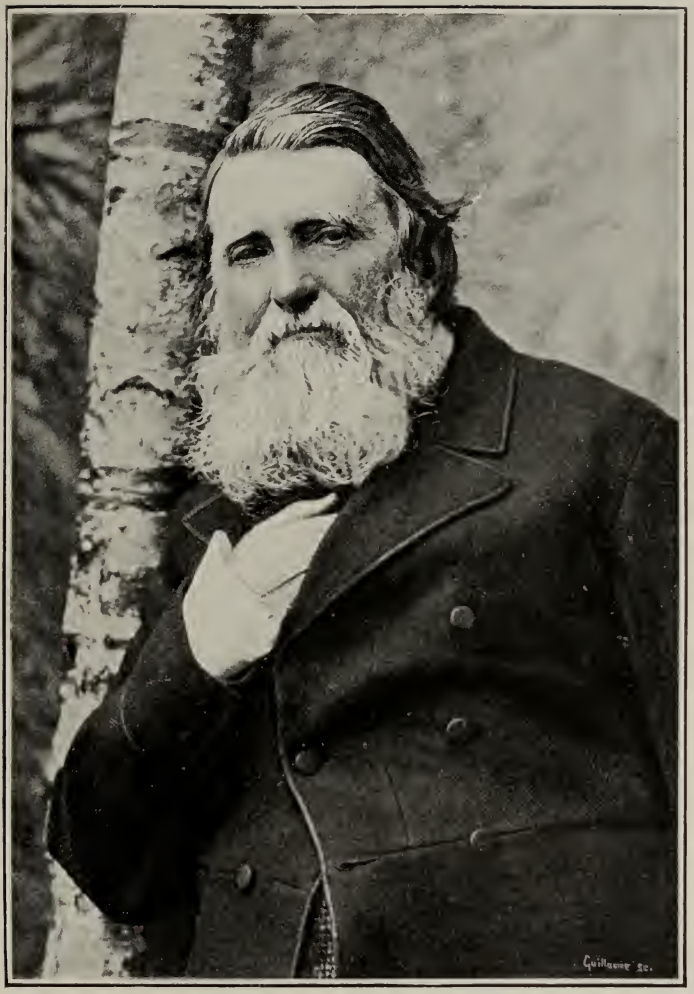
are perfectly rendered. This admirable portrait is nominally a water-colour; but that medium, strongly aided by body-colour, is reinforced with a pulpy substance, and resembles in method of execution the artist's well-known picture of "Grandfather's Pet." It was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1881, and was etched by the painter in the same year, the plate being published for him by the Fine Art Society.

The year 1884 saw a new portrait of "the Master." Being in London he visited Miss Kate Greenaway, and there sat to her for the commencement of a likeness which was never completed. It was there, doubtless, that his great admiration for her art sprang up, with the result with which we are all familiar—the Oxford lecture on "The Art of England," the illustrations in "Fors," and many a kindly reference of enthusiastic approval alike for the artist's dainty simplicity of style, and for her original beauty of draughtsmanship. But the portrait with which the year is to be credited was the pencil-drawing by Mr. Blake Wirgman, subsequently published in the *Graphic* in April, 1886. In consenting to sit, the Professor wrote to the lady who pleaded for Mr. Wirgman: "I'll have this portrait different from any that have been yet—only I always fall asleep

in a quarter of an hour, so everything in the way of expression must be got, tell the artist, in ten minutes." Soon after this alarming notification the first sitting took place at Denmark Hill, Ruskin pointing out the particular view the artist was to take; and the second in Mr. Burne-Jones' studio. When the drawing was finished, and the background worked up from the study at Denmark Hill, Ruskin put a few finishing touches to it himself—touches having chiefly reference to the hair and eyebrows, about which he was very particular—and the work went off to the engraver, and has now found a resting-place in my own collection.

Passing over as unauthentic and unofficial the portraits by Mr. Emptmeyer and Miss Webling, both exhibited at the Academy in 1888, I arrive at the bust of Mr. Conrad Dressler, executed by him in 1884, and exhibited at the New Gallery in 1889. This head, apart from its inherent merits as a work of art, is of special interest and value, as being the only one (so far as I know) which represents Mr. Ruskin with a beard, as he was known to his friends since 1881. As a likeness, I must admit that the engraving hardly does justice to Mr. Dressler's work—the characteristic stoop, erect though bent, and the falling cheeks, the slightly hooked nose, the open, sensitive nos-

trils, the pendant base of the septum, and the bony brows, do not appear as clearly in the engraving as they should—the fault manifestly lying with the lighting of it in the photograph from which the block was cut. Speaking to me of this same bust, which he said was "better than Boehm's," Mr. Ruskin once said—with a strong touch of pathos, yet with a look of irresistible humour, "Ah! it makes me look far more frantic than ever I've been!" In point of fact, Ruskin was, as I began by saying, very tender as regards his personal appearance; and I well remember his unfeigned pleasure when I told him upon one occasion that he certainly did not look his years. Readers of "Præterita" will remember the delightful story of "Little Rosie," when in 1858 Mr. Ruskin paid a visit to her mother:—"Rosie says never a word, but we continue to take stock of each other. 'I thought you *so* ugly,' she told me afterwards. She didn't quite mean that," the writer hastens to add; "but only, her mother having talked so much of my 'greatness' to her, she had expected me to be something like Garibaldi, or the Elgin Theseus, and was extremely disappointed." And again he confided, with mock despondency, to the Lady of Thwaite how he had recently had his photograph taken; that, although the likeness was good, he had



JOHN RUSKIN, 1886.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY BARRAUD.

(*See p. 169.*)

come out, as usual, as an ourang-outang. "I thought with my beard I was beginning to be just the least bit nice to look at. I would give up half my books for a new profile."

Some years ago we were talking about his portraits, when he took occasion to tell me, in a sweeping sort of way, that he was dissatisfied with all that had been done of him, and the truer and the more candid they were the less he cared for them. "I like to be flattered, both by pen and pencil, so it is done prettily and in good taste," he said, with a candid smile, not at all ashamed of the little confession. It is, however, in no sense discreditable to Mr. Dressler if he has not given just that touch of flattery —even conceding a lack of truth—of which the Professor admitted his fondness.

"I cannot tell how many sittings we had," wrote the sculptor, in a letter in which he described with glowing enthusiasm the fascination of his visit to the Professor in the spring of 1884. "They took place in the out-house, a very convenient place for my purpose; and I had as many as I wanted, some long and some short, as the humour served. I had, with the help of the old valet, made a little platform for the Professor to sit upon, and from this position he would watch me at my work for a couple of hours, sometimes talking the whole of the time.

. . . My deepest recollection of Professor Ruskin is as he stood one evening after dinner (during which the conversation had been about his life and work, and had been more animated and touching than usual) at the open window overhanging the lake. The sun had gone down, and he wistfully looked over towards the Old Man of Coniston, behind which the sky was still aglow. He seemed to be mentally reviewing his life's work. His head was held up, although his body was slightly stooping, his right hand behind his back, and his left held on to the casement for support. I was deeply impressed with the expression of mystery in his face, and determined to endeavour to reproduce it in my bust. I have failed in my ideal; but that is what I tried."

With that picture I close this chapter. The sun has indeed gone down behind the Grand Old Man of Coniston; while the sky is still all aglow with the fire of his words and the gold of his beneficent acts. His portrait, his true portrait, does not exist—it could not exist—not until the artist's hand can picture in paint or mould in clay the ever-varying, never-ending expression and the thousand moods, changeable but always honest, uncertain in temper but always good and kind and tender and righteous, that go to make up the face so lovingly remembered by his friends as that of John Ruskin.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE BLACK ARTS: A REVERIE IN THE STRAND."

BY JOHN RUSKIN.

[NOTE.—In the autumn of 1887 Ruskin was in London, staying, as usual, at Morley's Hotel, Trafalgar Square, whence a two minutes' walk would carry him into the National Gallery. His window overlooked the gallery "where the Turners are," he said markedly; but not caring for the light, he sat with his back towards it, drawing himself up into one side of it, with his knees and feet together in his characteristic attitude. The Editorship of the *Magazine of Art* had just been confided to me, and my announcement of it seemed to awaken his sympathetic enthusiasm. He clapped his hands and cried, "Bravo! I'm so glad. You have a great opportunity now for good," and immediately proposed to contribute an article to its pages. It was agreed that the paper in question should appear in the January number, and that it should be followed by at least one other. Then he went off to Sandgate to recuperate, whence he wrote: "I find the landlord and his

wife so nice and the rooms so comfortable that I've settled down (so far as I know) till Christmas. But please don't tell anybody where I am." And a few days later: "When do you want your bit of 'pleasant' writing? Did I say it would be pleasant? I have no confidence in that prospect. What I meant was that it wouldn't be deliberately *un*pleasant; and I will further promise it shall not be technical. But I fear it will be done mostly in grisaillet. I don't feel up to putting any sparkle in—nor colour neither." "For one thing," he wrote on another occasion—for he had now grown quite enthusiastic over the magazine, and was offering a good deal of very acceptable advice, "I shall strongly urge the publication of continuous series of things, good or bad. Half the dulness of all art books is their being really like specimen advertisement books, instead of complete accounts of anything." Then followed the announcement: "I have finished the introductory paper; six leaves like this, written as close. It will, perhaps, be shorter than you wished in print, but you will see it chats about a good many things, and I couldn't tack on the principal one to the tail of them; so that you had better begin your January number with Watts' more serious paper.

Then came the article, but with no title to it;

9th Jun 88

Dear Spielmann

I have mislaid a line I wrote to acknowledge cheque, and tell you what I meant to write next. — I never quite know, till I begin — but I want to go on about pure composition — as far as I can without being tiresome — and there will be something about skies, and trees — and I'll undertake that the drawings I send shall be representable — and not cost much in representing.

Ever faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin

M. H. Spielmann Esq

and as the press was waiting a telegram was despatched to him to supply the omission. The characteristic reply came: "I never compose by telegram, but call it 'The Black Arts,' if you like." A subsequent letter of confirmation supplied as a substitute "A Reverie in the Strand"; and, while protesting against the telegram, which "always makes me think somebody's dead," he replied to a question of mine as to the amount owing to him for the article: "You are indebted to me a penny a line; no more and no less. Of course, counted twopence through the double columns." Subsequent letters, as well as previous ones, contain further counsel and criticisms in respect to the *Magazine of Art*, and details of arrangement concerning the articles which were to follow the first — chiefly bearing on "body-colour Turners," as a contrast to the introductory matter, and on "pure composition, as far as I can without being tiresome; and there will be something about skies and trees, and I'll undertake that the drawings I send shall be representable, and not cost much in representing." But a period of indisposition followed, in which to his correspondence was appended the valedictory, "And I'm ever your cross old J. R.;" and a subsequent journey and return to Brantwood, with another spell of illness, made him

seek for a spell of complete rest, upon which it would have been cruel to break in. And so his intended series of papers remained incomplete, and "The Black Arts" remains as much a fragment of an intended whole as "Proserpina," "Love's Meinie," "Deucalion," "The Laws of Fesole," "Our Fathers Have Told Us," and even "Præterita" itself.]

It must be three or four years now* since I was in London, Christmas in the North country passing scarcely noted, with a white frost and a little bell-ringing, and I don't know London any more, nor where I am in it—except the Strand. In which, walking up and down the other day, and meditating over its wonderful displays of etchings and engravings and photographs, all done to perfection such as I had never thought possible in my younger days, it became an extremely searching and troublesome question with me what was to come of all this literally "black art," and how it was to influence the people of our great cities. For the first force of it—clearly in that field everyone is doing his sable best: there is no scamped photography nor careless etching; and for second force, there is a quantity of living char-

* October, 1887.

11th Jan

Dear Spielmann

Ill set to work
on the paper directly –
and choose the drawings
quickly – and omit any
a word you don't like about
the others – I may make
may it not be any mistake about
Mr Lang?: what shall
even him any harm?
So many thanks for
your kindness

Ever gratefully yrs.
Rudkin

acter in our big towns, especially in their girls, who have an energetic and business-like "know-all-about-it" kind of prettiness which is widely independent of colour, and which, with the parallel business characters, engineering and financial, of the city squiredom, can be vividly set forth by the photograph and the schools of painting developed out of it; then for the third force, there is the tourist curiosity and the scientific naturalism, which go round the world fetching big scenery home for us that we never had dreamed of: cliffs that look like the world split in two, and cataracts that look as if they fell from the moon, besides all kinds of antiquarian and architectural facts, which twenty lives could never have learned in the olden time. What is it all to come to? Are our lives in this kingdom of darkness to be indeed twenty times as wise and long as they were in the light?

The answer—what answer was possible to me—came chiefly in the form of fatigue, and a sorrowful longing for an old Prout washed in with Vandyke brown and British ink, or even a Harding forest scene with all the foliage done in zigzag.

And, indeed, for one thing, all this labour and realistic finishing makes us lose sight of the charm of easily-suggestive lines—nay, of

the power of lines, properly so called, altogether.

There is a little book, and a very precious and pretty one, of Dr. John Brown's, called "Something about a Well." It has a yellow paper cover, and on the cover a careful woodcut from one of the Doctor's own pen-sketches; two wire-haired terriers begging, and carrying an old hat between them.

There is certainly not more than five minutes' work, if that, in the original sketch; but the quantity of dog-life in those two beasts—the hill-weather that they have roughed through together, the wild fidelity of their wistful hearts, the pitiful, irresistible mendicancy of their eyes and paws—fills me with new wonder and love every time the little book falls out of any of the cherished heaps in my study.

No one has pleaded more for finish than I in past time, or oftener, or perhaps so strongly asserted the first principle of Leonardo, that a good picture should look like a mirror of the thing itself. But now that everybody can mirror the thing itself—at least the black and white of it—as easily as he takes his hat off, and then engrave the photograph, and steel the copper, and print piles and piles of the thing by steam, all as good as the first half-dozen proofs used to be, I begin to wish for a little less to look at,

22nd Jan 88

Dear Spielmann

I hope this may catch you before you start tomorrow to assure you that I quit McGro Cassells of all debt to me and that I'll do my best for next article – but I have been extremely unfit for anything this last ten days or so – and can give you my deepest sympathy in the terror that the thought of having a speech to make, would be to me. But I have no doubts you will say all that is right, and say it easily. Ever affectly Yrs.

Marion H. Spielmann Esq

V Ruskin

and would, for my own part, gladly exchange my tricks of stippling and tinting for the good Doctor's gift of drawing two wire-haired terriers with a wink.

And truly, putting all likings for old fashions out of the way, it remains certain that in a given time and with simple means, a man of imaginative power can do more, and express more, and excite the fancy of the spectator more, by frank outline than by completed work; and that assuredly there ought to be in all our national art schools an outline class trained to express themselves vigorously and accurately in that manner. Were there no other reason for such lessoning, it is a sufficient one that there are modes of genius which become richly productive in that restricted manner; and yet by no training could be raised into the excellence of painting. Neither Bewick nor Cruikshank in England, nor Retsch, nor Ludwig Richter, in Germany, could ever have become painters; their countrymen owe more to their unassuming instinct of invention than to the most exalted efforts of their historical schools.

But it must be noted, in passing, that the practice of outline in England, and I suppose partly in continental academies also, has been both disgraced and arrested by the endeavour to elevate it into the rendering of ideal and

heroic form, especially to the delineation of groups of statuary. Neither flesh nor sculptured marble can be outlined; and the endeavour to illustrate classical art and historical essays on it, by outlines of sculpture and architecture, has done the double harm of making outline common and dull, and preventing the public from learning that the merit of sculpture is in its surfaces, not its outlines. The essential value of outline is in its power of suggesting quantity, intricacy, and character, in accessory detail, and in the richly-ornamented treatment which can be carried over large spaces which in a finished painting must be lost in shade.

But I have said in many places before now, though never with enough insistence, that schools of outline ought to be associated with the elementary practice of those entering on the study of colour. Long before the patience or observation of children are capable of drawing in light and shade, they can appreciate the gaiety, and are refreshed by the interest of colour; and a very young child can be taught to wash it flatly, and confine it duly within limits. A little lady of nine years old coloured my whole volume of Guillim's heraldry for me without one transgression or blot; and there is no question but that the habit of even and ac-

curately limited tinting is the proper foundation of noble water-colour art.

In the original plan of "Modern Painters," under the head of "Ideas of Relation," I had planned an exact inquiry into the effects of colour-masses in juxtaposition; but found when I entered on it that there were no existing data in the note-books of painters from which any first principles could be deduced; and that the analysis of their unexplained work was far beyond my own power, the rather that the persons among my friends who had most definitely the gift of colour-arrangement were always least able to give any account of their own skill.

But, in its connection with the harmonies of music, the subject of the relations of pure colour is one of deep scientific and—I am sorry to use the alarming word, but there is no other—metaphysical interest; and without debate, the proper way of approaching it would be to give any young person of evident colour-faculty a series of interesting outline subjects, to colour with a limited number of determined tints, and to watch with them the pleasantness, or dulness—a discord of the arrangements which, according to the nature of the subjects, might be induced in the colours.

It is to be further observed that although

the skill now directed to the art of chromo-lithotint has achieved wonders in that mechanism, the perfection of illustrated work must always be in woodcut or engraving coloured by hand. No stamped tint of water-colour can ever perfectly give the gradation to the sharp edge left by a well-laid touch of the pencil. And there can be no question (it has so long been my habit to assert things—at all events very questionable in the terms I choose for them—in mere love of provocation, that now in my subdued state of age and infirmity I take refuge, as often as possible, in the Unquestionable) that great advantage might be gained in the geography classes of primary schools by a system of bright color adapted to *dissected* maps. In the aforesaid condition of age and infirmity which I sometimes find it very difficult to amuse, I have been greatly helped by getting hold of a dissected map or two—four, to be accurate—Europe, France, England, and Scotland, and find it extremely instructive (though I am by way of knowing as much geography as most people) to put them together out of chance-thrown heaps, when I am good for nothing else. I begin, for instance, in consequence of this exercise, to have some notion where Wiltshire is, and Montgomeryshire; and where the departments of Haute

Loire and Haute Garonne are in France, and whereabouts St. Petersburg is, in Russia. But the chief profit and pleasure of the business to me is in colouring the bits of counties for myself, to my own fancy, with nice, creamy body-colour, which covers up all the names, leaves nothing but the shape to guess the county by (or colour when once determined), and opens the most entertaining debates of which will be the prettiest grouping of colours on the condition of each being perfectly isolated.

By this means, also, some unchangeable facts about each district may at once be taught, far more valuable than the reticulation of roads and rails with which all maps are now, as a matter of course, encumbered, and with which a child at its dissected map period has nothing to do. Thus, generally reserving purple for the primitive rock districts, scarlet for the volcanic, green for meadow-land, and yellow for corn-fields, one can still get in the warm or cold hues of each colour variety enough to separate districts politically—if not geologically distinct; one can keep a dismal grey for the coal countries, a darker green for woodland—the forests of Sherwood and Arden, for instance—and then giving rich gold to the ecclesiastical and royal domains, and painting the lakes and rivers with ultra-marine, the map becomes a gay and

pleasant bit of kaleidoscopic iridescence without any question of colour-harmonies. But for the sake of these, by a good composer in variegation, the geological facts might be ignored, and fixing first on *long-confirmed* political ones, as, for instance, on the blanche-rose colour and damask-rose for York and Lancaster, and the gold for Wells, Durham, Winchester, and Canterbury, the other colours might be placed as their musical relations required, and lessons of their harmonic nature and power, such as could in no other so simple method be enforced, made at once convincing and delightful.

I need not say, of course, that in manuscript illumination and in painted glass, lessons of that kind are constant, and of the deepest interest; but in manuscript the intricacy of design, and in glass the inherent quality of the material, are so great a part of the matter that the abstract relations of colour cannot be observed in their simplicity. I intended in the conclusion of this letter to proceed into some inquiry as to the powers of chromolithotint; but the subject is completely distinct from that of colouring by hand, and I have been so much shaken in my former doubts of the capability of the process by the wonderful facsimiles of Turner vignettes, lately executed by Mr. Long, from the collection in the subterranean domain

of the National Gallery, that I must ask permission for farther study of these results before venturing on any debate of their probable range in the future.

CHAPTER XVI.

EPILOGUE.

There is little for me to add to this essay. I have purposely refrained from enlarging on Ruskin's many-sided character and achievements, lest the size of the book should be carried far beyond the appointed limits. But I have, I think, done enough to direct the attention of the reader to many of the chief—the most important or the most amusing—of Ruskin's views, and to awaken a desire in some to study the works of one of the most original thinkers and most interesting writers of the day. Opinions may vary as to the practicability of his synthetic philosophy, and as to the soundness of what he held to be the basis and root-foundation of all true art. He may have regarded art too much as a moralist and too little as a technician; he may have raised certain individual workers too high in the comparative scale of art, so that the fall from off their perches has been inevitable. To all such errors and more a great reformer is liable, who single-handed, fierce and determined, and

in face of all opposition, has sought to lift the art of his country into a mighty power for good, and to raise her conscience at the same time to a level of purity and morality. But whatever be the fate of his teaching, whatever the destiny of his artistic fame, he will always be numbered among the mighty ones of the pen; one of the greatest, best, and kindest creatures who ever fought the people's fight of righteousness and truth.

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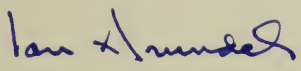

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